

The BENEFIT
OF THE DOUBT

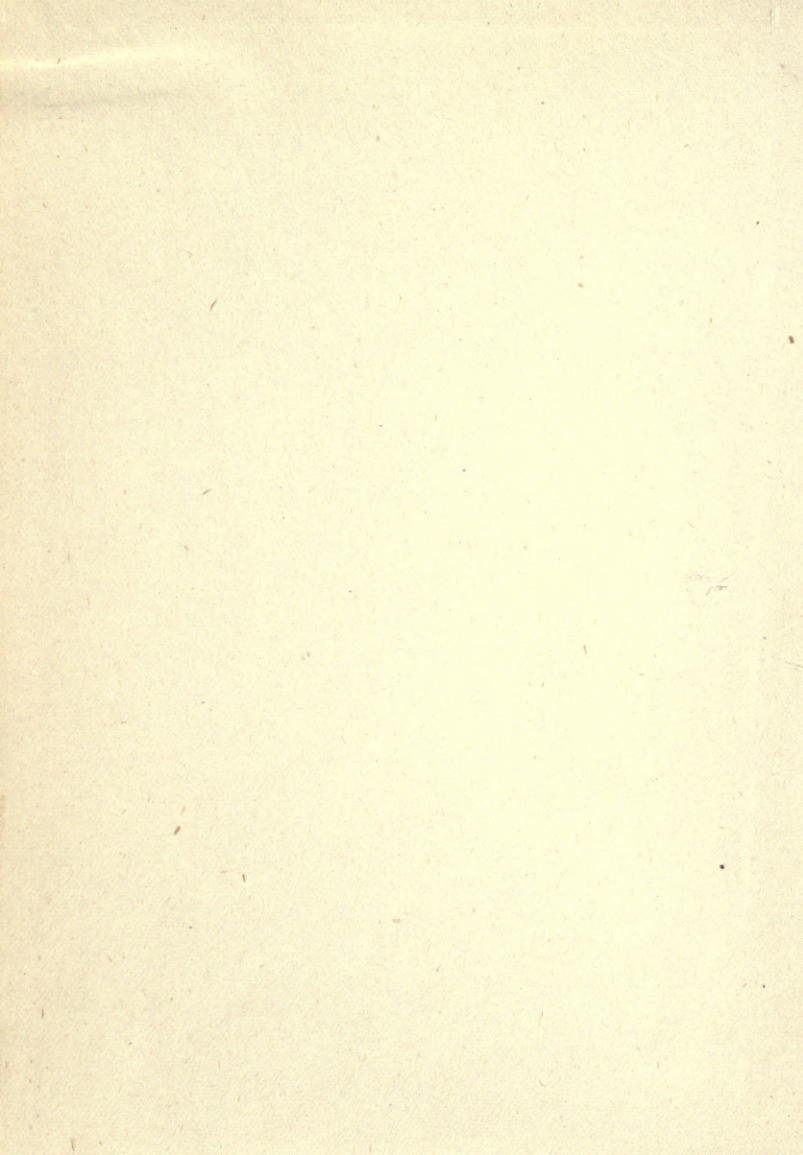


SPENSER









Charlotte Elizabeth Druser,
from
her mother.

June 2th / 1879.

THE
Benefit of The Doubt

BY

MARY CLARE SPENSER

FIFTH EDITION

NEW YORK
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
27 & 29 WEST 23D STREET
1886

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1882

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The Benefit of the Doubt

I.

ALL ABROAD.

AMONG the many friends, relatives, acquaintances, or lovers who met one early evening in the commodious central station of Milan (where order reigns so supreme that, in the bustle of in-coming and out-going trains, to and from all points, none are crowded or jostled) two persons were about to pass each other, each bound on his own way, with but a casual : "*Buona sera*," when the elder of the two, a man tall and angular, with piercing black eyes full of fire and ardor, with long black hair gray sprinkled, who might have been Paganini himself, but who was not, came suddenly to a halt, exclaiming :

"*Ola !* signore."

As the young man thus hailed turned with a graceful movement and, advancing a step toward the other, stood in a superb attitude denoting polite attention, the one who had hailed him said, still in Italian :

“Your pardon, Signor Dunraven. But you have been away from Milan for some weeks, in—in London, I think.”

“*Sì*, signor professore, as you say, in London,” replied Dunraven, meeting the full blaze of the professor’s eyes but for a moment only ; his own finely formed, but rather uncertain blue eyes—that never seemed to meet any other eyes fairly—drifting carelessly off into space.

“And I, I am just from Paris,” resumed the professor, who, with the first of his keen glances, had fully taken the whole of the six feet and three inches of the other in. “I went to Paris with your uncle, *il Signor Whyte*, but —*ebbene* ! I returned without him.”

Nothing lighter could well be conceived than the easy grace with which young Dunraven changed his attitude to one that not only showed to still better advantage his tall, athletic, and finely-proportioned form, and his somewhat picturesque attire, but also served

as a sort of challenge embodying a question, as though he asked :

“ Is that all ? What more can it be you wish of me ? ”

“ It is of your uncle, the Signor Whyte, I would speak,” said the professor, replying as to a spoken interrogation. “ Have you heard from him lately ? ” he added in a deep voice, and with a significant look full of ominous portent, that, instead of arousing anxiety, fell on the polished surface before him as harmlessly as a bomb-shell on the exterior of an ironclad.

“ Let me think,” replied Dunraven, carelessly, but still carefully retaining his pose of studied attention. “ No, Signor Trapassi, I have not heard from my uncle for full three weeks.”

“ Nor from madamigella, your cousin ? ”

“ Not one word.” And Dunraven, with consummate skill, changed his attitude to one the very apotheosis of tender regret. “ Miss Garnet very seldom favors me with a line. But you mistake, Signor Trapassi, Miss Breta Garnet is not my cousin ; Signor Whyte, her own uncle, is my uncle by marriage only. His wife was my mother’s sister.”

"Let us go from here, and on into the city," said Trapassi. "It would be better that what I have to say should not be overheard. You walk, do you not, Signor Dunraven? For myself I always walk. *Per Bacco!* I get enough of sitting in the cars."

"*Sì, signore.* By all means let us walk. I have no affection for the *società degli omnibus*, or for the musty *fiacres*," returned Dunraven, laughing lightly.

As they passed through the porta Principe Umberto, from the *strada* belting the city outside its walls, Trapassi, casting one of his lightning glances on the impassively handsome blonde face of his companion, said in a startling tone:

"I parted from the Signor Whyte in the Rue de Clichy! *Ahime!* The debtor's prison, you know."

"The debtor's prison, I know," repeated Dunraven, turning gracefully and halting a moment to contemplate the professor. "Yes, I know the Clichy of Paris, but, pardon me, *maestro*, I know nothing of your meaning."

"It is, that he himself, the Signor Whyte, is there, incarcerated for quite a large sum."

Fairly surprised for an instant out of an attitude he had assumed—as they proceeded on their way,—indicative of respectful attention to the words of one older and wiser than himself, although by no means his equal in point of wealth, Dunraven could only repeat :

“ Quite a large sum ! ”

“ We went together to Paris, as I said,” continued Trapassi, “ to see what could be done about your uncle’s, the Signor Whyte’s, loss of property, and—”

“ The loss of his property ! ” again caught up Dunraven.

“ *Corpo di Bacco !* Of every *danaro* he is worth ! And no sooner had he set foot in Paris than he was arrested and clapped into that vile prison. All through the failure of the concern in which all his money had been invested.”

“ You take my breath away ! You shock me beyond measure, signor professore ! ” returned Dunraven (though from the airiness of his tone he might have said : “ You delight me beyond measure ! ”). “ Was it that new enterprise, the great banking bubble of Marchmont & Guion, in which my uncle was so unfortunate as to invest ? ”

"In which the Signor Gulielmo Waldo invested his property for him," said Trapassi significantly.

"Yes, Uncle William has for years managed—or mismanaged Mr. Whyte's affairs,—who hates business, and cares only for his music and—my cousin Breta."

"Hundreds besides the Signor Whyte have been ruined by that Marchmont & Guion failure," asserted the professor. "The Signor Gulielmo Waldo himself—"

"Ha! has my Uncle William also gone up?" asked Dunraven, very much as though he was speaking of a balloon ascension.

"He also has lost every farthing, and has suddenly disappeared, it being confidently reported that he has gone to the United States to seek his fortune on some one of the southwestern ranches."

"Oh, no fear for Uncle William! He will speedily retrieve himself in some way. He always does. He is used to it. But something must be done for Uncle Raymond Whyte without loss of time."

"He must be extricated from that wretched prison at once," broke in the professor.

"As you say, signore. It must necessarily be very unpleasant for him."

"Unpleasant? *Per dio santo!* it is intolerable, not to be borne!" denounced the professor, hotly, with energetic gesture and flashing eyes. "Just think of the Signorina Breta! How can she—"

"Ah! tell me when I do *not* think of her. She is always to be thought of. Faith! I have thought of nothing else all my life. Breta Garnet is the embodiment of my creed,—of all I believe in or worship."

"You are fortunate in possessing a creed in these days of rank unbelief, when to doubt is so much the rage." This the professor said in a tone so dry that bleached chips could not be dryer, adding: "Your worship, signore, is, I believe—"

"The beautiful, always the beautiful," interrupted Dunraven airily, unmindful of the pointed edge to his companion's words. "I live for the day," continued he, walking on in an attitude indicative of rapt and subdued enthusiasm; "for the day when the inharmonies of our dual existence shall be reconciled and become fused into a unity that will cause all man-

kind to become as one vibrating soul—vibrating to the beautiful, the all-perfect. But I fear we shall not realize this Utopia in my time.”

“I fear not,” returned the professor, with a smile full of malicious humor, and a stronger flavor of the bleached chips in his tone.

The professor seemed to take the greatest interest in studying the bright, handsome fellow by his side ; in noting the light-hearted pleasure he took in himself and his attitudes ; in his “creed” ; his ready knowledge of languages ; and in his faultless pronunciation,—occasionally mixing the soft, poetic, consonant-eliding Venetian with his purest Tuscan.

“Your uncle, the Signor Whyte, has spoken to me of a fine place near Nuova York owned by the Damigella Breta. I suppose she might now like to sell it,” suggested the professor.

“It is a magnificent place, or was, and is erected on a magnificent site. It is the remains, the last of a very large property which should have been hers, the Signorina Breta’s, but which that infernal Baron Erlau made way with.”

“Yes, I have heard, but what of the grand place ?” urged the professor.

"It is already, and has been for several years, up for sale," returned Dunraven, "but, unfortunately, the house is full of ghosts, and no one cares to purchase."

"Full of—*benissimo!* Full of—of what?" demanded the professor.

"Of ghosts," replied Dunraven, as lightly as though the commonest thing in the world was a house full of ghosts.

"In what shape do these—ghosts manifest themselves?" asked the professor, with an incredulous smile born of ignorance.

"In the shape of noises."

"Rats, loose casements, north winds whistling down chimneys," suggested the professor.

"Very possibly," acquiesced Dunraven, with light indifference.

"But to return to your uncle, I myself have a plan by which I feel sure the Signor Whyte can be liberated, and at once."

"You!" exclaimed Dunraven.

"Do not imagine, signore, that I, a poor devil of a *maestro di musica* can command thousands of francs with which to help any one. But the Signor Whyte has many friends who will—"

“Your pardon, Signor Trapassi, but this is a duty for me, *solamente*, to perform. I will see the Signorina Breta at once, and will then start for Paris.”

“*Your* pardon, signore. Permit me to say you should start without delay; in the next train for Paris. The signorina will be better pleased,—*naturalmente*. She has not been a pupil of mine for the last eight years—since she was eight years old,—and a phenomenal pupil, with that voice of hers without a parallel, for me not to become well acquainted with the fact that her uncle, the Signor Whyte, is the very cynosure of her eyes.”

“As you say, signor professore,” returned Dunraven airily. And with a graceful bow and an “*Addio*,” he turned into another street.

II.

A VERY FAIR OFFER.

BUT instead of retracing his steps to the station, Dunraven, by a short cut he knew well, soon reached Mr. Whyte's picturesque *casa*, the door of which he found wide open, and just ready to emerge from it were Mr. Whyte's butler and cook, each bearing immense bundles; the butler having also a large basket on his arm, through the wicker-work of which Dunraven saw the gleam of silver.

Taking all in at half a glance, he sprang lightly into the passage-way, and so suddenly that he gave to the astonished butler so decided an impetus backward, that he fell against the corpulent cook, she exclaiming in the vile accent of the Milanese people : “ *Oh, per dio santo !* ”

Following up his advantage before they had time to recover themselves, Dunraven backed them through the door of a waiting-room at the

left, and pulling the door shut, he turned the key upon them.

This effected, he passed out into the street, and seeing a patrol—a *guardia notturno*—passing the corner beyond, he hailed him, and soon had the pair under arrest ; the cook vehemently protesting that she should never have thought of it but for that *bugiardo* the *diavolo*, while the butler said nothing.

“ *Volete venir meco ?* ” demanded the *guardia notturno* politely. Whereupon, leaving their bundles, the two went with him meekly to the lock-up.

Turning from the crestfallen culprits with the careless ease that characterized all his movements, Dunraven, as the front door closed on them, ascended the stairway, his feet noiseless on the deep pile of the Moquette carpet, and seeking the drawing-room, was arrested at the threshold of its open door by the glimpse of a picture that impressed itself on his vision and haunted him for years after.

It was not the still life of the elegantly appointed room, with its rare and costly art-treasures so daintily arranged that nothing seemed out of place or too much, that so affected him.

Nor was it the pose of Madama la Contessa, with her fine aristocratic face,—who, seated at the centre-table with the rays of a large astral lamp blazing full upon her, and so absorbed in a letter she was reading, she did not hear his step,—that took away his breath.

Of an ancient and impoverished family, Madama the Contessa Romano, as he well knew, for the love she bore Breta's mother and the pity she felt for the little five-year-old Breta herself, when that mother died, had taken the full charge of the little orphan, receiving from Mr. Whyte for her invaluable services a handsome and most respectfully offered yearly stipend. Still, noble and estimable as she was, her attitudes, ever conventionally polished, never startled one into excessive admiration.

It was at the far end of the room Dunraven's eyes rested in such rapt admiration ; where, framed in by one of the trellised windows, in all the charm of her young beauty,—a beauty it was becoming quite the fashion in Milan to admit had not its equal,—Breta herself stood ; the yellow, mellow moonlight, streaming down full upon her, and, glinting through the soft waves of her pretty brown hair, formed a golden halo

around her lovely head, making her appear, in the fleecy clouds of her white dress, almost like one transfigured.

She was gazing, with large solemn eyes, out upon the moonlighted garden. Dunraven had never before seen her look so thoughtful and sad,—nor so charming.

“How she manages it I cannot see,” was his mental comment. “Without effort, without study, she falls into attitudes that would take the most practised of us months to attain. And she, the enshrinement of all beauty,—she laughs at it all, and yet, in spite of herself, expresses in her every look and motion, a preciousness,—the very ideal of our Renaissance.”

How many seconds longer the young disciple of the æsthetic cult would silently have devoured with his eyes the lovely “Ideal,” is not known, for Madama la Contessa, looking up from her letter, rising and welcoming him, broke the charm.

Breta came forward from out the moonlight, and meeting him half way in the room, with the calm serenity of manner so habitual to her, greeted him with the cordiality of a friend of

long standing ; he carrying the hand she offered him to his lips, according to the foreign custom he had learned in his long sojourn abroad.

“Have you heard the sad news of Uncle Ray ?” she asked, with unwonted mournfulness of cadence. “I have just received a letter from him. Madama was reading it when you came,” she added.

“Not an hour ago,” returned Dunraven, telling himself that Breta’s sadness made her even more beautiful than ever. “I met in the station signor the professore, who had just returned from Paris,” added he, handing a chair to Breta, near that of Madama the Contessa. And taking a chair himself beside Breta, and assuming a peculiarly graceful position, indicative of his excessive admiration for her, he recounted his interview with the professor, and his adventure with cook and butler.

“Ill news travels fast,” said the contessa. “They thought the *padrone* could not look after his property and that they would. But we must not be remiss in his absence. I will go and see to the other servants, and that all is safe.”

“Rather let me go, madama,” urged Breta, rising from her chair as the contessa arose.

"Not so, my dear," objected the contessa, waving Breta back. "Stay with your cousin Noel, whom you have not seen for several weeks."

"Madama la Contessa Romano is a lady I most profoundly esteem," said Dunraven to Breta, still speaking in Italian. He had risen with the ladies and now reseated himself in the most striking attitude of his repertory, after Breta had resumed her chair.

"Did Signor Trapassi say when Uncle Ray would be liberated from that dreadful prison?" asked Breta wistfully, unmindful of Dunraven's flippant speech.

"Unfortunately, Breta *mia*, not until he or some one pays the sum—"

"Is it a very large sum, Noel?" interrupted Breta.

"Several thousand piastres."

"How many thousand?"

"Twenty thousand."

"Twenty thousand piastres would not be so very much if Uncle Ray had not lost all his property. But how can he pay it now?" asked Breta anxiously. "Twenty thousand dollars is a terrible sum when, for the first time, one feels

the lack of it. Nothing in the house must be sold, Uncle Ray said in his letter, on account of creditors."

"Have no anxiety, *carissima*. It can all be arranged."

"Can it? How? Who is to arrange it?" persisted Breta.

"Will you give me the privilege, *cara* Breta?"

"Will I—give you—I do not understand," faltered Breta. And then observing a peculiar gleam in Dunraven's blue eyes, and an unwonted flush on his blonde face, she stopped short in her speech for a moment. "Will I give you the privilege? Is not Uncle Ray your uncle? Can *you* liberate him?"

"My uncle by marriage only, you know, Breta. But, *carissima*, I did not come to discuss that, but to ask you if you would make me the happiest man the world contains by—" The expression gathering in her dark eyes, that were fixed full upon him, confused and for a moment checked him.

Rising to his feet he approached her.

"Breta, *amato bene*, will you trust yourself to my keeping?" he exclaimed, bending with

infinite grace on one knee before her, and gazing with impassioned eyes into her young face. "You are to me the all-perfect, the all-beautiful, the realization of my dream—" He came to a sudden stop again as Breta, rising from her chair, took a few steps backward, and then, turning from him, walked the length of the room and stood again in the broad moonlight; making of herself, unconsciously, a charming picture once more—framed by the trellised, moonlighted window.

Dunraven, with a movement as though he would go over to her, restrained himself, and stood silent and watchful; his eyes devouring the soft, child-like bloom of her cheek and lips, the graceful waves of her hair—so dark in the shade, so golden in the light,—that the September breeze was gently stirring. He noted the unusual lustre of her dark eyes, that seemed intensified by some feeling he was not permitted to share.

Presently she turned, walked deliberately toward him again, and standing erect in front of him said, in a tone with no bitterness in it, simply calm, with a charming dignity that aroused in him a still greater admiration for her :

“What you have just said to me would, I suppose, be considered a very fair offer. So much for so much. A condition. If I will accede to your proposition you will pay the twenty thousand dollars to liberate—not your—but—my uncle.”

Her logical way of putting it caused his proposal to seem to him more as though he had made her a declaration of war than a declaration of love; and he was taken completely aback.

“Breta!” he ejaculated pleadingly, “do not, pray do not mistake me! I make no conditions. How can I? Consider *our* uncle released the moment I can get to—”

“Just how much money have you?” asked she pitilessly. “I never before thought of you as possessing money; never before gave money a thought in any way. You have a great deal, have you not?”

Dunraven, taken still more aback by the sarcasm conveyed in her words than by her tone so devoid of sarcasm, or her manner so self-contained and settled in purpose, was unprepared for a reply.

“My only guardian being detained in prison,

away from me," continued she, "I have no one to look after my interests, and before deciding it is necessary for me to know just how much you—"

"Breta, for the love of heaven, desist! Breta—*carissima*, I—I do not know you! You are in an entirely new rôle! Breta satirical,—a rôle, in all the diversity of her charming little ways, I have never before seen her assume."

"Breta bargained for! So much for so much!" said she, a tinge of scorn in the quiet of her tone. "Who ever before has seen her in that—rôle?"

"Breta, *cugina mia*, let me adjure you to hear me. I repeat,—I make no conditions. I simply offer you the devotion of a life. I have always adored you—I always shall. All I have is yours—all I am."

Breta withdrew the hand he attempted to take, but so softly, so quietly,—stepping back a few paces again,—that she seemed to melt away from him like a dream.

"Perhaps it is some one of your other suitors who is more favored," continued he, with bitterness. "Do not look surprised; you thought I did not know. But I know every thing that comes

near you. You see, everybody wants to marry you—always will. I wanted to marry you when you were two years old and I was seven, and when you were seven and I twelve, and so on straight through until now that you are sixteen and I twenty-one. If I have never before told you, and if we have always been like brother and sister, it is because I never before could command the courage to tell you how I worship you. Breta, my *bellissima*, I shall never be happy until—until you marry me. Or is it il Conte Buonarotti who is the fortunate he?"

Breta, who had retreated from him but a few steps, was standing with one hand resting on the contessa's chair, while with the other she was lightly turning over the leaves of the book the contessa had been reading before receiving from her her uncle's letter,—the occasional illustrations receiving from her inscrutable eyes an occasional passing glance. She looked up, meeting Dunraven's eyes as he mentioned Buonarotti's name, but vouchsafed no other reply.

Approaching nearer to her, Dunraven added :

"Or it may be the Signor Ludovico Goldoni, or il Duca di Lanasco. You see I know about

them all. Breta, will you marry me?" he concluded abruptly, approaching another step nearer to her.

"Noel, you are unlike yourself. I do not know you; you are in an entirely new—rôle," she returned, using his own words with a quiet, delicate touch of spirit that made her seem intangible as a white flame,—as though before him, and yet miles away from him."

"Breta," he said with a light laugh, changing his mode of attack, "I always thought—I always hoped—you had some little—cousinly regard—some little sisterly—affection for me. Am I not right? Is it not so?"

"Not a little, but a great deal sisterly—affection for you, Noel, but—"

"Say no more, Breta *mia*," and he came so close beside her his breath vibrated the loose threads of her hair, as he bent his tall form over her, gazing down into her face, but not offering to touch her, adding: "I am going, *cara* Breta,—I am going direct to Paris. Remember, you have *not* refused me. I go with the benefit of the doubt to cheer me. *Addio*," and he made a graceful exit, stopping at the door an instant to say again: "*Addio*."

Breta sank back in the contessa's chair, as white as her dress ; and a few moments after, when Bertrando, the footman, announced : " Il Signor Trapassi," she looked up, as she rose to welcome the professor, her eyes moist with tears.

The tears had disappeared when she greeted him, but the *maestro* showed a sympathetic appreciation of her trouble by his paternal tone, as he said :

" I have come, *figlia mia*, to bring you good news. Your uncle will be liberated at once, and through you."

" Through me, signor professore !" exclaimed Breta, in profound astonishment.

" Through you, *figlia mia*,—if you so decide. I bear with me, for your acceptance, an offer from—"

" An offer—*maestro*—from—" repeated Breta, with a look of dismay.

" Not an offer of marriage, madamigella. Heaven forbid !" prayed the professor, chuckling at her discomfiture,—his piercing eyes and quick brain having comprehended the cause of it. He had met Dunraven going out of the house ; he knew of Buonarotti, of Goldoni, of

the Duca di Lanasco—the latter noble gentleman himself had told the *maestro* of his defeat and of his admiration for the charming little *Americana*, the *maestro's* pupil.

“Not an offer of marriage,—*grazie a dio!*” he repeated, with comic gravity. “But an offer from Signor the Director of La Scala, for you to sing as prima donna, upon your own terms, now, this coming season;—the rehearsals to commence at once. Also, you are to receive a sum, a handsome sum, as soon as you sign this contract, and the professor drew from the breast-pocket of his coat a folded paper.

“This is very sudden, *maestro*;—am I competent—to—”

“Competent, madamigella! I am here with *this*,” and the *maestro* lightly tapped the paper in his hand. “Is not that sufficient answer? *Per Bacco!* None since Malibran or Sontag can reach you. Signor the Impresario knows what he is about, if any one does.”

“He ought to, certainly,” returned Breta, musingly.

“He has heard you, as you know. The great Verdi has heard you—and you well know his judgment of your voice and method. What

more would you?" asked the professor, with great energy, his eyes burning like two coals of fire.

"Less fear of the life—the publicity of it, and the—"

"The *diavolo*! Go and talk with Madama Verdi, the great Strepponi that was. You know her. She will tell you what the life is."

"She is one of the brave ones, while I am a horrible coward, *maestro*."

"And I—I taught you to sing. Will that go for something or nothing?"

"And I, if I can sing, owe it all to your teaching," replied Breta, with a charming smile.

"*Ta, ta! figlia mia*. Nature has done more for you than your old *maestro*. Nature has given you all, except the method it has been my good fortune to impart to an incomparable intelligence."

"That last shot, signor professore, calls for another. You forgot to add that the method you speak of is that of the first *maestro* in Italy," said Breta in a tone of respectful raillery. "But should I consent—" continued she, growing thoughtful.

"Which of course you will do," said the professor, conclusively.

"Should I consent, then as to the terms. You say on my own terms. But I—I know nothing of terms."

"How will these figures answer, madamigella? I inserted them in pencil myself," and the professor, opening the contract, handed it to her, pointing to a certain clause.

"Oh, I cannot be worth all that!" exclaimed Breta, reading as one in a dream.

"Shall I ask the Duca di Lanasco how much he considers you worth?" maliciously asked the professor.

"To the management, I mean, of course," returned Breta, ignoring the jocoseness of the professor, whom all Milan declared could have been a great buffo actor, had he so chosen.

"To the management, certainly. Well, we shall see this day six months. Now, will you sign?"

"There is so much to take into consideration."

"Let me do the considering while you do first the signing and then the singing, madamigella."

"And you say I am to have twenty thousand piastres now, at once. That will just pay back

—” here Breta stopped. “Yes, signor professore, I will sign.”

The quick gleam that shot down on her from the professor’s coal-black eyes, would have revealed to her, had she encountered it, that her unspoken words had been divined, as he handed her a pen filled with ink, he had taken from his pocket.

“But if I should fail and suffer *fiasco*?” asked Breta, with the pen poised in the air.

“In that space write your name,” said the professor, leaning over the young girl, and pointing with his long finger to the spot. “I predict for you a great success, *figlia mia*,” continued he, as he laid on the table before her a check for the twenty thousand piastres, his eagle eyes softening as he looked down from his height upon her.

“It is very kind of you, signor professore, to say so.”

“You will have the whole world at your feet.”

“That is the worst of it,” returned Breta, with a pretty knotting up of her white forehead. “If one need sing only for the love of it,—the pure love of true art; and not have to undergo

the deafening shrieks and thunders of applause—that put one in mind of the ragings of a menagerie of wild beasts ;—and worse still, if one did not have to undergo the—the whole world at one's feet, and all that. *Maestro mio* I shall love—I shall live in the singing—the music ; but I—I shall never like the life.”

“ Ah, my *poverina*, you will get over all that,” replied Trapassi, laughing maliciously. “ A *gran Diva*, as you will be, must take all that without question—*senza dubbio*.”

The professor was standing, ready to take his leave, still laughing and assuring Breta that she would get over all that, as Madama the Contessa entered. He stopped with Italian politeness to hear her enlarge on the condition of household affairs. She had found, she said, Bertrando the footman, Luigi the coachman, and all the rest, except Nisida the Signorina Breta's maid, ignorant of the theft and arrest of the butler and cook. Nisida was on her way to give the alarm as the Signor Dunraven entered.

The contessa was delighted with Breta's engagement to sing, and predicted for her darling a great career.

“And now, although we shall have to retrench, of course,” said she, with a great sigh of relief, “we shall not be compelled to give up this pretty *casa*. It is such a lovely dwelling, it would be a thousand pities ;—and then the Signor Whyte is so much attached to it, and has filled it with so many exquisite gems of art!”

III.

BRETA'S GHOSTS.

AT the conclusion of Breta's "unprecedentedly successful engagement," as the papers had it, nothing would induce her to accept another engagement at La Scala, or at the opera-houses of any other city,—although she had received various most flattering inducements. In vain all the *maestri* urged.

The Signor Trapassi was in the profoundest despair.

"Upon my life, madamigella," fumed he, "you are the first successful cantatrice the world has yet seen that ever threw away such a prospect!—fame, wealth, every thing,—for there is no height you could not reach;—and all because a crowd of fools persecute you with their senseless attentions (for I know that is the cause,) that any other woman in the universe, but you, would be proud of."

But Breta was inexorable. And when, for reasons of her own, she did not fully divulge, she not only would not sing any more on any stage, but persisted also in quitting Milan and Europe, to sail for the shores of her native land with her uncle, Mr. Whyte (who invariably indulged her in her every wish), her old *maestro*, in the height of his anguish, bade her farewell with broken words and tears in his eyes.

Three years had passed since Breta left Milan ; and one lovely morning—it was in mid-June—a burly gentleman, in black of faultless cut, sought a certain mansion that had been abandoned to decay ;—riding through one of the gaps in its evergreen hedge, unmindful of its great iron gates, that, half off their hinges, were ever open.

His horse, a superb animal, black as the rider's apparel, picked his way, with loosened rein, through the straggling weeds of the carriage drive, once so gravel-smooth ; affording his master ample time, on his way, to study sunlight effects through grand vistas, where down in the depths of abrupt and rocky ravines wound a sparkling stream. Or to note in

smoother spots (so ample were the grounds) the picturesque confusion of half-tumbled-down summer-houses, voiceless fountains, fishless basins ; broken-nosed Venuses tilted awry on their pedestals ; Cupids shorn of their fat little arms ; dethroned Bacchuses toppling aslant as though overcome by their own wine ; and on a confusion of Naiads, Apollos, Mercuries, Satyrs, and Fauns ;—all canting helplessly at odd angles, fantastically crowned or draped by wayward creepers, and staring blankly at each other, as though vainly asking what ruthless vandals had converted into an incongruous jumble, a once well-executed design of garden-art, telling certain elaborate mythological stories.

Reining up at last in front of the dismantled mansion, gorgeous even in its desolation, and hitching his horse to a broken column of the veranda instead of to any of the ostentatiously carved hitching-posts, he walked up the broad steps and stood before an opened oriel window, peering in as though he rather expected some startling something to spring out upon him.

“Can you inform me, sir, as to the terms of purchase of this property ?” said he to the person he saw within.

Obtaining no response, he shouted at the top of his lungs :

“ Ho ! within there ! I wish to make inquiries relative to the purchase of this property.”

“ Excuse me, sir,” replied a small-sized, middle-aged gentleman, showing himself at the window. “ Pray don’t exert your lungs so painfully. I am not in the least deaf. I did not know, when you first spoke, but that you might be the ghost in person, and I make it a rule never to reply to it. But I never know, I get things mixed up so.”

“ Then there *is* a ghost ? That is what I wish to ascertain.”

“ Go to the front door, sir, and I will let you in. The ghost won’t harm you,—at least it never has any one yet ; though I never know, I get things mixed up so.”

Seated in the room of the open window, the stranger in black looked around him. But discovering only legitimate objects—elegantly carved old-time chairs, cabinets, and tables of the same antique model, a claw-footed secretary of elaborate workmanship, containing books and writing implements, some music on a rack, and a violin on one of the chairs ; also masterly

pictures on the walls,—his glance reverted to the little gentleman, who had returned to his occupation of grilling, in a dainty, natty way, a small beefsteak over a few coals in the capacious, old-fashioned grate.

“Then there *is* a ghost?” again demanded the black guest, his eyes starting on another voyage around the room, and bringing up in a half-opened, curiously-carved wardrobe, in which were hanging vestments of small size and quaint pattern, the property evidently of his little host.

“Before I answer your query, sir, I should like to be certain that you are not the ghost come at last to pounce upon me with a business pretext. It is up to any dodge. It has repeatedly threatened to appear. I have long been expecting it. But I never know, I get things mixed up so.”

As the little gentleman said this, in a tone half querulous, half jocose, his visitor demanded with a most unghostly laugh: “Do I look like an it? Not a pennyweight less than two hundred pounds, I assure you, Mr. ——”

“Whyte,” returned the other mildly, almost as though his having a name at all required an apology.

"I am of the legal profession, Mr. Whyte. My client is a speculator in ghosts; so now for *your* ghost, if you please," and the legal gentleman concluded with another expansive laugh, as though the ghost were the best joke of the season.

Little Mr. Whyte nodded his head meditatively, and in response to his visitor's burly laughter, twitched his mouth around into a twisted smile, expressive of mild endurance rather than of mirth, that showed smiles to be but stray waifs on his face.

His legal guest, with another searching glance, wished to know at what figure he held the property, including the ghost.

Mr. Whyte met the professional eyes fastened on his with a look as clear and steadfast as that of an unhackneyed boy (he had altogether a freshness and innocence about him suggestive of a boy who had forgotten to grow old), and seating himself at the table, upon which he had placed plates and condiments, his grilled steak, coffee-cups, and rolls, he invited his guest, by a quick wave of his little hand, to partake of his cheer, which the guest, by a heavy wave of his ponderous hand, declined.

“The price of this property,” said he, “is fifty thousand dollars, less, by more than half, than it would be were it not for the ghost, you see, sir. If this poor place were as I knew it years ago, when it had no ghost, it could not be bought for any money. I will show you around as soon as you like. That’s why I am here. I have no responsibility of ownership; the ghost is sufficient for me. I sometimes think more than sufficient,—but I never know, I get things mixed up so.” And little Mr. Whyte applied himself to his coffee and rolls in a quaint, self-communing way, as though working out the Infinite Calculus.

“Might I ask who is the owner?” queried his guest.

“Certainly, sir, it is no secret. Though I sometimes think it quite possible that the owner does not own it at all, but that the ghost does. But I never know, I—”

“I will make a note of the owner’s name,” suggested the gentleman in black, taking out his tablets, and nodding a dignified acceptance of the error of his first demand in asking if he might ask,—which his little host had so innocently corrected.

With an air of profoundest reverence, as a devotee might speak of the Virgin Mother, the little gentleman took from his lips the coffee-cup, and fitting it softly and caressingly into its saucer,—as though it were a chalice containing the long-sought typical grail,—he replied :

“ The legal and sole possessor of this property is a young and beautiful lady,—beautiful past conception, and good as she is beautiful,—whose name is Miss Breta—”

“ The legal and sole possessor of this property is a young and beautiful lady,—beautiful past conception, and good as she is beautiful,—whose name is Miss Breta—” sang an unseen person in a rich, full tenor, adapting little Mr. Whyte's words to a grand air from Himmel's “ Ossian,” and abruptly ending on an augmented second, as though the words were insufficient with which to finish the sequence.

“ Who 's that ? ” demanded the guest in black.
“ Are you a ventriloquist, Mr. Whyte ? ”

Mr. Whyte not responding, he repeated his question, looking around the room with startled dignity.

“ Excuse me, sir, I am no ventriloquist. I was waiting to hear if it would not resume the

theme and end honestly on the tonic. It has quite the habit of leaving off on the diminished fifth perhaps, or on the minor seventh, or, worse, on the major seventh, leaving you in an uncomfortable state of suspense—like being partly hung and then cut down. If it had half a conscience it would make a point of concluding satisfactorily on the tonic."

The stranger gravely ejaculated: "Ah, indeed!" but notwithstanding his portly dignity, he looked, speaking in musical parlance, decidedly unstrung,—as though a tonic might be satisfactory to him also.

But he made a great show of being unconcerned, and asked:

"Does this ghost of yours do any thing besides sing, Mr. Whyte?"

"Every thing else! I sometimes think the house will come down about my ears, when it or THEY (for the ghost is legion) get so boisterous as to make me almost fancy myself a ghost along with them. But then I never know, I get things mixed up so."

"Mixed up, I should think so! One day of it would do for me. Why, it was right in the room here, over there. But it is just what my client is after."

"We have had many persons looking at this place, on account of its magnificent site,—but all object, like yourself, to the ghost. And now, to have an applicant turn up who wants a ghost! —I should say your client must be somewhat eccentric. But then I never know, I—"

"In respect to desiring ghosts for society, yes, but otherwise he is in no sort eccentric," interrupted the other.

"We all have our peculiarities," replied little Mr. Whyte, with great simplicity. "I sometimes think I have mine. But then I—"

"The young gentleman for whom I am transacting this business," said the stranger, "is singularly endowed by nature, and can afford to have his peculiarities. He has rare gifts which have been highly cultured,—is of an exceedingly handsome exterior,—of an uncommonly generous disposition; and is the possessor of great wealth. His name is Joslyn de —"

The last name of the fortunate he, to whom had been vouchsafed so many enviable gifts, was drowned in the sudden crash of brass and the shriek of catgut, followed by a magnificent soprano solo, in a bell-like voice and true operatic style; the words beginning with,

"The young gentleman," and ending with, "Joslyn de—" being substituted for those of the original score.

"It *did* end on the tonic!" rapturously exclaimed little Mr. Whyte, catching up his violin and rendering portions of the melody over again, with a method finished and masterly.

A round of applause, the clapping of unseen hands, the shouts of "Bravo!" "Encore!" of unseen voices, following the little gentleman's violin-playing, he took quite as a matter of course. His visitor tried also to look unconcerned, as though he had been in the habit of being serenaded and concerted by shadows every month in the year.

"I must say, Mr. Whyte," he remarked, "not to enlarge upon your own playing, which is faultless; just, and broad in style, equal to that of any violinist I ever heard, and I've heard them all—all the public ones I mean,—I must say, that if I had been conveyed here blindfolded in the midst of that operatic blast, I should have sworn I had been taken to Rossini's 'Barber.' I never heard a finer rendering of the '*una voce poco fa*,' or to more curious words. I've heard Sontag's Rosina, and Malibran's

Rosina ; I've heard Jenny Lind sing the *cavatina* inimitably ; have made prima donnas a study from a boy ;—and it seems as though years had been wiped out, and that I had just listened again to Malibran. I heard her in Milan when I was fifteen. But let us proceed to business. We will go out, if you please, under the trees,—if the ghost does not go there. I have heard enough and can report favorably. I have heard quite sufficient."

The ghost was of another opinion, for as little Mr. Whyte arose from his seat saying : "It never leaves the house, we will go—" he was interrupted by a perfect diapason of deafening discord ; as though a whole army of the tallest of ancient Titans, and the shortest of modern "short-boys," had clubbed together for a concert called callithumpian.

The legal gentleman who came to seek a ghost, having gotten more ghost than he expected, rushed from the house with prodigious strides, little Mr. Whyte trotting unconcernedly after him.

"There, I am out of that infernal din ! I always detested noise. I get as far from the big drums at the opera as I can. I never go to

hear Wagner, as I cannot stand the fusilade of heavy cannon and doubling of blatant brass instruments (which doubling always produces discordant fifths) in Wagner's late operas. I always go out of town on the Fourth of July, and,—but if Joslyn de Grey likes the ghostly racket, he is welcome to it."

"We should all follow the bent of our inclinations if we can ; many of us cannot," said Mr. Whyte.

"It is entirely on scientific grounds that Mr. de Grey wishes a house of ghosts. Young as he is, only twenty-six, he is a great scientist, devoted to the advance of natural science. He is aiming to discover—I really cannot state exactly what, but he is experimenting with electrical batteries and chemical compounds."

"Oh !" meekly responded Mr. Whyte. "And now that you and I and the ghost have hobnobbed together in so friendly a way," continued he, "I will make bold to ask you by what name I shall address you. When I make the acquaintance of a new ghost—I mean individual,—I like to have a handle by which memory can take hold of when thinking of him."

"With all pleasure imaginable. My name is

Benjamin Black, at your service ; here is my card."

" Bless me !" exclaimed little Mr. Whyte in his fresh, roseate way ; the boy that had forgotten to grow old, sticking out prominently.

" What a curious collision of colors ! Black, white, red, and grey, mingle, mingle, and so on." And he put Mr. Black's card carefully in his wallet.

" Where do you get your red, Mr. Whyte ? " asked Mr. Black, laughing ponderously.

" My niece's name is Garnet, Breta Garnet," replied Mr. Whyte, with another twisted smile. " Now if I were a believer in such things, and I am not," added he, " I should say it meant something. But I never know, I get—"

" You do well not to believe in any thing, Mr. Whyte."

" Any thing supernatural, you mean."

" Supernatural, of course," assented Mr. Black.

" Except ghosts, of course," interposed Mr. Whyte.

" Well, yes, except ghosts," laughingly assented Mr. Black, with a new and saving faith in the late demonstrations. " But what a charm-

ing spot!" he exclaimed, recovering from his laugh and looking about him over the landscape.

Mr. Whyte had led the way to a grove of elms on an ascent; from which point, over an intervening gorge, down whose bank a beautiful spring-fed cascade foamed and sparkled, could be seen the pretty village of Lea below, and a vast extent of valley beyond, with mountains in the distance.

"Why, such a nook as this, with these giant elms overhead and that view in front, is worth its weight in gold," continued Mr. Black, seating himself on the least shattered of the carved oaken benches near the natural fountain, which was the generous source of the cascade.

"You may well say that, Mr. Black. And this knoll, and these elms, and this fountain, and these carved oaken seats, have seen grand company, I can tell you. Gentlemen of foreign legations, Presidents of the United States, noblemen with titles nearly as long as the Declaration of Independence,—American, Italian, French, Austrian, English; all were welcome here; for Mr. Howard Garnet kept open house in those days."

"Was Mr. Howard Garnet Miss Breta's father?"

"Her grandfather," replied little Mr. Whyte.

"And how did the place come to be left to such utter desolation?"

"That is the story of the house. Every house has its story, more or less; and that house (and little Mr. Whyte jerked his small thumb over toward the devastated mansion) has its story more, I should judge. But I never know, I—"

"Can the story be told?" asked Mr. Black, looking over toward the house, just discernible through the trees, as though possibly the "legion" might be peering at him from its windows.

"It is involved in mystery, the solution of it being buried with Mr. Howard Garnet, on whom no censure was ever attached, the Garnets having all been true gentle-folk as a family. But, always generous and unsuspicious, he permitted a dark, wily Austrian, of the name of Erlau, a baron, to gain so unaccountable an ascendancy over him, that Baron Erlau not only lived here with him, but he managed Mr. Garnet's affairs. To this Erlau the whole evil was

attributed, an ugly rumor being afloat that he had occasioned Mr. Garnet's death. But there was no proof—nothing that could be taken hold of legally. The rest can be all told in three words, and as I see you take an interest in it I will tell it to you. After Mr. Howard Garnet's strange death the house was abandoned—the ghosts having taken possession, you see. His widow (Breta's grandmother) went abroad with her only son (Breta's father), and there she died. This son, on coming of age, married my sister, and then, for the first time, discovered that the Baron of Erlau had made way with the entire property (such things are, you know), and nothing could be done about it, for the baron himself suddenly died—shot himself. Nothing was left of the vast Garnet property but this place, which, being deeded to his son's heirs by Mr. Howard Garnet (Breta proving the sole heir), could not be touched by the rapacious baron. Breta's father, when he found himself worth nothing, was so affected on account of his young wife, that he took sick and died. I then brought my sister (Breta's mother) to the United States for a change, where Breta was born, and where I lost my own dear little wife. Breta was

then two years old, and, heart-broken, I took her and her mother back to Milan, where, when Breta was five years old, her mother (my sister) died. All death, you see, so far ; but it is the way with some families. I owned a handsome property then, left me by my father, and I spared nothing in the education of Breta—I had no children of my own. Three and a half years ago my brother-in-law (my wife's youngest brother), acting as my agent (I never had any turn for business), made an unfortunate investment, and I lost every cent."

"Stay!" exclaimed Mr. Black. "Yes, to be sure! It was the Signorina Breta Garnet,—the very name! I was in Milan about three and a half years ago, on some important business for a client of mine. A cantatrice, a perfect marvel of a cantatrice, a *débutante*, about whom all Milan was going wild, was singing at the time. I heard her every opera night during my stay in the city. She was very young—sixteen I think they said, and was a marvel of beauty as well. Was it—,was she? —" And here Mr. Black stopped, looking intently at Mr. Whyte.

"My niece," responded Mr. Whyte, with

much simplicity. "She is now teaching in Miss Rutherford's Seminary, on that hill just above the village." And he indicated the spot by a sweep of his small hand.

"But I do not understand; she, a great prima donna, teaching in a seminary! why, she was creating a perfect furor—"

"Pardon me," mildly interrupted little Mr. Whyte, "but that was the difficulty. She could not stand it, you see, sir."

"She could not—stand—could not stand what?"

"The fuss they made, you know."

"I thought prima donnas liked a fuss made over them; and the more the fuss the better pleased they always were," and Mr. Black laughed ponderously at his own conceit.

One of his twisted smiles briefly illumined Mr. Whyte's fresh, roseate face.

"It may be as you say, sir," observed he, "but my niece never liked it; and, when her engagement was up, she could not be prevailed upon to make any more engagements, and—we came here."

"And does she like it here?"

"Vastly."

"Strange, very strange to be willing to bury such marvellous gifts as hers—and she so young—in a little country place like this."

"Why, you see, Mr. Black, she had no peace of her life. She was serenaded so constantly she could get no sleep. She had the greatest profusion of costly presents sent her that she would not accept and could not return, as they were anonymous. Everybody was making her offers of marriage, and fighting duels for her, and she was glad enough to get away and to bury herself, as you call it, in the seclusion of—"

"Yes, yes, I see," said Mr. Black, thoughtfully, not waiting for his host to add his last words. "Miss Garnet, with her exquisite voice and method, and her remarkable dramatic talent, and her wonderful beauty, possesses also a certain magnetic charm that is irresistible. I saw that when I heard her. She is like no one else; yes, yes, I see, I can well understand."

"For myself," continued Mr. Whyte, "I play on the organ down there in that pretty Gothic church. You can just see it from here. I could get a very much larger salary in New York, and could run down there on the cars of course

every Sunday, but Breta is taking much pleasure in singing in the choir—they cannot applaud in a church, you know,—and I do not like to leave her, her pleasure pleases me.”

“Naturally,” returned Mr. Black.

Thanking Mr. White for his narration, he assured him that with his own musical gift and his Stradivarius,—a genuine one as he had seen by its form—he ought to have been heard from in New York and elsewhere, and by this time reaped a fortune, to compensate for the one he had lost.

Little Mr. Whyte, with the greatest simplicity, acknowledged that although he had never played in public he had achieved quite a name in Milan, and Paris, and Venice, and in London also, with his violin, among the *dilettanti di musica* and even the *maestri*.

“I really care for little else in this world but music,—except my niece,” added he, and then reverting to the business on hand: “You knew,” said he, “that the greater part of the valuable paintings and all the plate had been removed from the house?”

Mr. Black was acquainted with the fact.

“And the greater part of the library also.

But furniture and every thing else remain intact, and in a good state of preservation. The interior of the house has suffered little or none in comparison with the exterior. Its strong fastenings protected the house. The grounds suffered the most. If I were sharp, Mr. Black," and little Mr. Whyte gave one of his twisted smiles, "I should double on the price, it being the ghost your client demands. But I will be content with the fifty thousand dollars fixed upon a year ago, when it was ascertained no one would purchase on account of the ghost."

"There is much legal justice in that way of putting the question," returned Mr. Black, laughing. He then proposed waiting on Miss Garnet at once for her signature to the deed, which he had with him.

Mr. Whyte, acquiescing, proceeded back to the house to lock the doors, and saddling his horse, he rode forth by the side of Mr. Black to make a business call on his niece.

Some writing and witnessing and signing were done, and a legal transfer was made to Joslyn de Grey, of Elmwood, with its haunted house.

IV.

THERE ARE PEOPLE AND PEOPLE.

THE hum of lesson-saying was hushed. The patter of little feet and the patter of large feet had ceased making echoes in the great airy class-rooms of Miss Rutherford's Seminary, devoted to mischief and learning.

It was Sunday morning, the day after the sale of Elmwood, and was just before the breakfast hour.

Assembled in the pupils' parlor were as many only of the fair owners of the pattering feet as were the regular boarding pupils of the establishment, among whom the possession of that traditionary foot, under whose aristocratic arch the stream of water could flow, had become a standing boast; while any allusion to the foot of that widely-sung Ethiopian maiden, the hollow of which made a hole in the ground, gave great offence.

Miss Pella Morton, a young lady favored by fortune in being a "red-headed heiress," and a very pretty blonde belle, and who was in her last year, and successfully undergoing the operation of being finished, had just remarked, in a mealy falsetto, that she saw "no way of eluding the impending necessity of church attendance."

"For my part," exclaimed Miss Frank Bowers (Frank, seldom called by the gentler abbreviation of Fanny, was also in her last year, but was not being finished,—the material refusing the finishing polish; was also an heiress, but of the reverse type from Miss Morton, with jet-black hair, shading into that blue sheen of the raven's wing about which poets used to rave before some hue of red became a fashionable necessity),—"for *my* part, I have an excruciating headache, and shall not go to church," and Miss Bowers pointed her words by a significant nod that sent the shadows rippling down the crimped waves of her long, dark hair, like undulating clouds of fleece over a storm-sky.

"That means no breakfast," squealed Miss Morton, elevating her pretty, classically-formed nose contemptuously. "I shall not go without my breakfast for all the churches that were ever made."

"I could quote Scripture about the advisability of not living by bread alone, and all that, in favor of my argument," returned Frank, "if it were not slightly wicked ; Miss Morton *en est l' arbitre*," she added, with a humorous deference that created a general laugh.

" *Slightly* wicked, and *I* the judge ! " sneered Pella Morton, again elevating her nose and drawing down the corners of her prettily-chiselled mouth.

" Friends, lovers, and so forth, lend me your ears," quoted Frank, in dramatic contralto. "*Voici !* I have, as I said, an excruciating headache, and it has attacked me in the form of an apple-pie,—a plump pie, deep and broad, like that famous one in the picture-books that B bit."

" Stolen ! " proclaimed Pella Morton.

" *Grand ciel !* Here her—stolen ! *Not stolen !* " tragically rejoined Frank, deepening the rich contralto of her voice to produce as ludicrous a contrast as possible to Pella's piping treble. " Honestly bought, and with an honest tip to the cook big enough to insure secrecy,—with a view to this Sunday morning's delectation."

"Bribery and corruption!" ejaculated Pella Morton, in her squeakiest falsetto.

"*Je suis tout à vous,*" returned Frank mockingly. "As much bribery and corruption as you like. *Que me voulez-vous?*"

"What I would have of you is English. *I* never mix languages," retorted Pella Morton. "When *I* speak French I speak French, and when *I* speak English, I speak *English*."

"How delightfully dissimilar we are!" said Frank, with good-humored irony. "I always mix them. I liked them mixed. But to business. Who will join me in headache and pie? There is sufficient for three square meals,—a perfect gorge! It won't do for too many to indulge in headache, or, to descend to the language of modern classics, Miss Rutherford would twig and wool us,—and worse, the pie would n't hold out. Now who goes in for a pie-ous headache?"

In the midst of the laughter that had to be kept within Sunday limits, two of Frank's staunchest friends offered themselves as candidates.

"Ha! 'T is well!" as Victor Hugo sententiously remarks. So now, Pella Morton, *s' il*

vous plait, and all assembled, look to it that you do not peach,—if you do not—apple-pie.”

During the fresh burst of laughter that followed Frank's last essay, the door opened and Breta Garnet, exquisitely dressed in white and looking as cool and fresh as a tea-rose, walked, or rather seemed to float, into the room,—with such inimitable grace did she move.

“Are you not very warm in here this lovely morning?” asked she, her voice with a wood's robin ring in it, while her large clear eyes took in something strange and not quite harmonious in the faces around her; as with a tender, sympathetic glance, she looked from one to another. “I left the door open for the western breeze that comes in through the windows of the corridor; but if you prefer it, girls, it can be closed again,” added Breta, as with a smile, her calm glance, with another questioning survey of the group, rested lovingly on the mischievous face of her friend Frank.

“Frank has a violent headache, Miss Breta, and was afraid of the draught,” responded Pella, with a winning smile. “For myself,” she added, with a little high-treble laugh, “I am fond of the air.”

"*Sans doute*; violent, on my voracity," returned the ready Frank in as cavernous a contralto as she could command without injury to her throat, and with diamond-pointed flashes at Pella from her black eyes that were brimming over with mirth, "The air is delicious, Miss Garnet. It was Pella, by the way, who hermetically sealed us in here, that she might have a comfortable growl about having no headache as pretext for non-church attendance. As for mine, it is not dangerous,—only slightly apple-plectic, and will readily yield to pie-ous meditation."

A soft light shone in Breta's dark gray eyes, and her mouth dimpled into a radiant smile, in sympathetic response to the laughter from the merry group at Frank's bad puns. She seated herself on the sofa beside Frank, who was languidly fanning herself, with half-shut eyes, thereby showing to advantage their long, jet-black lashes; and Breta was instantly surrounded by three or four of the younger girls. One, the youngest of Miss Rutherford's pupils, a pretty child of eleven, and sister to Frank, wedged herself so closely to Breta that Frank uttered the protest:

"How can you be so rude, Nelly? Don't you see you are rumpling Miss Breta's lovely white muslin? I would not have you all swarming and buzzing around me this hot day, like so many flies, for all the—"

"No one would ever dream of such a thing, sister Frank," interrupted Nelly, with juvenile dignity "You are not one of the kind. You are too much like Shakespeare's fretful porcupine, with sharp quills sticking out all around; instead of being made of super-refined honey, like Miss Breta. Flies love honey," and Nelly gave Breta an emphatic hug.

"Nelly, if you won't say sharp things to your sister Frances, I will tell you and Gracie Gay a story."

"I hope it will have a moral that Frank can profit from, Miss Breta," said Pella, turning sweetly to Breta.

A brilliant light shot into Breta's eyes, as with a significant smile she began:

"Once upon a time a great and powerful nation—that we might liken to a boarding-school, as from first to last it has had some hard old lessons to learn—rebelled against the tyranny of its rulers, who were rioting in feasts,

while the poor people were ground down and starved. But, unfortunately, from listening to false teachers, the poor people went to such a mad extreme that the whole nation was deluged in rivers of blood, and the whole world was set in a blaze of indignation and dismay. Law and order in that nation were hooted down. Sunday, and all Sunday observances were trampled under foot, as they impeded what was called the growth of Reason. This deity—for they made a goddess of the thing they called Reason, which had been nursed into life by the false teachers and the too apt pupils—was honored with altars, on which incense was burned, and before whose shrine torches blazed night and day. The days were divided into nine working days (in which very little work was done except cutting off people's heads), and every tenth day was proclaimed a holiday for all kinds of mad revelry—a holiday of horrors. At last when the poor people had feasted on blood and terror long enough, they were only too thankful to be forced back into law and order and Sundays and churches and church-going."

"A very terse synopsis of the 'Reign of

Terror,' and all aimed at me—a regular *coup de foudre* hitting the heart of the target. I, a rebel to discipline and church-going, am declared to embody the whole Jacobin outbreak, guillotine included. Meekly, therefore, in the language called slang—our modern classics that I love so well,—I can only say: 'Pile up the agony.' 'I acknowledge the corn.'” And Frank accompanied her words with intonation of voice and look of such droll resignation that the whole crowd of girls, including Pella—always her antagonist—broke into a peal of irresistible laughter.

Breta endeavored to preserve a decorously straight face, but was compelled to give way to laughter with the rest. Frank's quick eye noted this last convert to her power, and her face settled into the contented expression of having won a highly prized victory.

“Mamma tried and tried to break Frank from making funny faces,” put in Nelly Bowers, “telling her it was n't refined and lady-like, and all that. She told her that she might as well turn circus clown and done with it,—and that the height of her ambition was to make fools laugh. I always noticed, though, that

mamma could never finish her lecture without ending with a laugh herself."

"Nell, never tell tales out of school. But, *allons!* to return to our mutton," resumed Frank. "As the Reign of Terror could be traced back to the false teachers, so, all we boarding-school victims need to make angels of us, are teachers who have sense enough not to bulldoze us into doing our duty. Now when I—"

"Very seditious sentiments!" piped in Pella. "Angels, indeed! and bulldoze too! Just as though we did not have it all in us and more too."

"Oh, yes; I know you believe in total depravity of infants and all that blue-nosed bosh," returned Frank, her black eyes flashing disdain. "Now let us go back to first principles. Who taught Eve—a lady who was altogether good and lovely—to eat apples—before they were made into pies,—but the false teacher, Satan?"

"Eve had it all in her; and I consider it sacrilegious to call her a *lady*, just as though—"

"Why, Pella, you would n't call her a gentleman, would you?" asked Frank, with a pretended simplicity that caused a laugh.

"As though she were like any one else," continued Pella disdainfully. "But she had it all in her or she would not have listened to Satan," concluded Pella, with spiteful decision.

"Don't believe a word of it. Have you nothing to say in defence of our first mother, Miss Garnet? Sail in, this is a free fight."

"Be still, Frank! You sha' n't drag my Miss Breta into your discussions, as you call them, with Pella," exclaimed little Nelly Bowers, throwing her arms lovingly around Breta, starched muslin included. "You know you never believe a word you are saying, Frank, and only talk to set Pella on."

"Miss Breta is fully able to defend herself, Nell," piped up Pella. "Do tell us, Miss Breta, that you consider Frank has entirely the wrong side of the question. And then, too, any one can tell her she has been indulging in very trivial behavior for Sunday."

With a sweet serenity of manner all her own, Breta said she was strongly reminded of the fable of the chameleon; "which ends, as you all know," she continued, "with the umpire's producing a specimen of that saurian that—by a chance always occurring in stories—he hap-

pened to have handy in his pocket. Whereby he proved two things: The difficulty of judging from appearances; and that a conclusion may be both right and wrong."

"Aimed at both of us, Pella. Our folly might have been answered by a long, bulldozing moral essay,—"

"Frank would not have lived the night through, if she had not gotten in her favorite word again," broke in Pella.

"By a long, bulldozing moral essay," continued Frank, "that would have tired me out and made me determined to stick to my own opinion, especially if a wrong one—which it generally is. Now when I leave school I shall set up a model boarding-school with Miss Garnet at the head,—for having the hunkiest way of making one in love with duty and self-sacrifice and other disagreeable things. She'll turn out a whole raft of Martha Washingtons, Madame de Staëls—"

"Don't you think, Miss Breta, as a preparatory step, Frank had better give up slang?" asked Pella sweetly.

"Girls," said Breta, rising with a smile that, unmistakable in its meaning, was the embodi

ment of sunshine, "Miss Rutherford intimated last evening that she intends giving us the whole of one day this week for a picnic to Rocky Glen. We are to take every thing to make the day pleasant,—including apple-pies." And, with a significant glance at Frank that remained tender and loving in spite of its playful sarcasm, Breta left the room, with a light, easy grace of movement that Pella Morton had been long and vainly endeavoring to imitate.

In the midst of the general satisfaction at the prospect of the picnic, Frank exclaimed :

"It is all Breta Garnet's doing. Miss Rutherford will grant her a favor she would not to the whole school combined."

"I hope Miss Rutherford will not fall ill in consequence," sneered Miss Rivers, a tall young lady, also in her last year, and undergoing the finishing process.

"I am sure," mildly expostulated pretty Sadie Burrill, "Miss Rutherford is much more lenient than—"

"Who constituted you her defender, Sadie?" snapped Pella.

"Pella means that, Sadie," said Frank, laughing. "Now Breta Garnet," continued she,

“who is so different from every one else,—so superior—”

“You could put a Miss to her name if she is,” again snapped Pella. “She is our teacher in singing if she is just your age and just my age. And besides she is a great prima donna, if she *is* here teaching singing. I always call her Miss Breta, although she is no older than I am, and proper respect demands—”

“Proper fiddlesticks!” elegantly broke in Frank. “When any one is wonderful,” she continued, her great velvety black eyes flashing, and the rich coloring of her face growing more vivid, as a smile full of playful sarcasm curved her mouth, “we do not not say Miss in speaking of them. Who says Miss Lind, or Miss Arc, or Miss Nightingale, or Miss Patti? Is n’t it always Jenny Lind, Joan of Arc, Florence Nightingale, Adelina Patti? Now Breta Garnet is wonderful [Frank grew earnest]. She sings as divinely as Malibran—Papa has heard them both, and he knows—and she would have made as great a name if she had only kept on. She is just too lovely for any thing—even to her dress. Which one of us could have a crowd of children hanging around us, as she

always has, and keep fit to be seen? They don't *phaze* her gown"; Frank threw a glance over at Pella and repeated: "They don't *phaze* her gown. I think she inherits the gift from Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines, who could travel through underground passages, and be confined in dungeons, and then come out shining in snowy-white costume, ready for a ball or a wedding."

"Nothing so marvellous about Miss Breta's gown to-day, if they don't *phaze* it. *Phaze* indeed! Real India mull does n't crease," said Pella loftily. "Though, as every one knows, Miss Breta is a young lady who is superior in every respect."

"Miss Breta does every thing exquisitely. Frank exaggerates nothing in calling her wonderful, she being gifted with that rare thing—genius," said pretty Sadie Burrill, who, besides being a very pretty young lady, a year younger than Frank, was her warmest friend. "And then, too," she continued in her pleasant voice, "Miss Breta Garnet has been thoroughly educated. And as for her dress—why, in Paris and Milan, where she has spent so many years of her life, well,—in Italy dress is one of the

Fine Arts, and in Paris it is one of the Positive Sciences."

"There are people and people," exclaimed Frank Bowers, giving Sadie a bright, appreciative look; "people with their dogmas that offer premiums on deception (I lay the whole of this apple-pie shindy on the Rutherford shoulders, and sha' n't flunk out now I am in for it); and then there are people who give you better impulses and make you ashamed of every thing that is not as good and pure as themselves. I know only one such, and she has just gone out of the room in a cloud of white muslin, lacking wings only to make her an angel."

"Hear, hear!" declaimed Pella Morton.

"She puts you in mind of the Mona Lisa; Papa brought a rare copy from Italy, for which he gave a fabulous sum. She has the same tender, mellow eyes, and charm of face, that looks as though she went showering down apple blossoms, cool and fragrant upon the—"

"Hear! hear!" broke in Pella again, with a shrill little laugh.

But there was no chance to hear, for the din of the breakfast bell started into activity the

patter and clatter of the various-sized feet,—the half-repentant Frank Bowers being left with only one of her proselytes, the other having deserted her standard.

“We shall kill ourselves, Sadie,” said she dismally to her ally. “You will have to go one half the pie, I the other. They will range our tombstones side by side, with the sacred and appropriate, if ungrammatical, inscription on them of the Latin words: ‘*Pi-et-as-beat-um.*’”

V.

“DO HURRY ON.”

ALL the church bells of the village were ringing, and Miss Marcia Rutherford—towering above her sex, like the Roman Marcia—was out upon the lawn in front of her seminary, surrounded by her pupils, who, with their fair, fresh faces, and in their pretty summer dresses, looked like a flock of milk-white doves ready for a flight; Miss Rutherford herself appearing like a well-disposed royal eagle, who, instead of eating up all the doves at a meal, was peacefully marshalling them into marching order.

Miss Rutherford's Seminary—like herself, lofty and imposing in appearance—was situated on an elevation of ground at the edge of the village and overlooking it. At the back, and on each side of the school-buildings, was a grove of magnificent trees, among which, conspicuous, was the Northern species of the

giant magnolia, with its stiff, inodorous yellow blossoms, known as the tulip or cucumber tree.

A long, straight row of Lombardy poplars, ranged at measured distances along the entire front of the lawn, before the seminary, gave it a military, well-guarded appearance.

Miss Rutherford, liberal in all things consistent with her position as head of a young ladies' academy, permitted her pupils to worship at various churches, in accordance with the tenets of their parents; insisting only in giving in command at least one teacher to each division of pupils, as young ladies of boarding-schools are not proverbial for sedateness.

Forsaking the dusty road, their way to the village, by a short cut, lay through a shady lane, and then across a short strip of meadow, along the banks of a stream margined by willows,—in all less than a quarter of a mile.

The school procession was always a pretty sight as it entered the village; teachers and pupils filing off so orderly to their respective churches, Miss Rutherford heading the largest division, mild Miss Amanda (Miss Rutherford's sister) the next, and so on, down to the two who

accompanied Breta to the Gothic Episcopal Church.

Breta, on this day, proceeded to her church alone, Frank and Sadie being victims to the Sunday headache Miss Rutherford did not deem it prudent to gainsay.

In the picturesque little church-yard, fragrant with vines and roses, Breta passed a number of people, all of whom greeted her effusively ; for, with her beautiful voice and sweet face, she was everywhere a favorite.

Going up the aisle to the choir, which was built down on the floor of the church, in the enclosure to the right of the chancel, Breta found her uncle seated at the organ, awaiting the last toll of the bell to commence his voluntary.

He leaned over toward her as she took her usual seat near him, and asked in undertone why Miss Bowers and Miss Burrill were not with her.

"They stayed at home to eat apple-pie," replied Breta, in the same *sotto voce*.

Mr. Whyte, quite mystified for a moment, then made it apparent, by one of his twisted smiles, that he had taken the situation in.

"I am sorry," whispered he, "not to have

Miss Bowers' contralto, as I invited Mr. de Grey to hear the music. That is he on the last of the choir seats. A wonderfully fine face has he not? He arrived at the old place last evening. My dear, as Miss Bowers is not here you cannot sing the *Quis est Homo*; the *Stabat Mater* will have to wait. You must sing a solo instead,—‘I know that my Redeemer liveth.’”

“Any thing you please, Uncle Ray, dear, but don't let us talk any more, people are beginning to look this way.”

Little Mr. Whyte, taking a modest survey around the church, with the fresh, innocent way he had, that made him always young, began softly turning over the loose music scores that were lying on the top of the upper manual, one of which he handed to Breta.

Breta fastened her eyes determinedly on the score, having found them, in spite of herself, attracted in the direction of de Grey.

“Uncle Ray is right, he has a wonderfully fine face,” thought she, much as though having contemplated a rare picture. “A face altogether expressive of never having entertained one ignoble thought, and he does not look in the least like one addicted to—ghosts.”

Unconscious of Breta's scrutiny, de Grey sat looking toward the church entrance, seemingly taking mental notes of the incomers as they entered their pews, his bearing indicating a person of refinement and culture. His forehead was broad ; his chin well defined, cleft and clean-cut, denoting resolution and courage ; with large steadfast eyes that had a dreamy look in them, his mouth gave promise of a warm, genial, mirth-loving nature. He had the dark hair and eyes, and the clear olive complexion that pronounced him a descendant of the Norman, rather than the Saxon race.

"He is an entirely new type," mused Breta, who, with another glance at his still averted face, resolutely determined to look no more. "As handsome as the Count Buonarotti (the handsomest man I ever saw), this de Grey has a look of having more to him than any one I ever met,—more capacity for comprehending every thing, or for suffering, or enjoying. His face, with all its brightness is instinct with sadness,—the sadness one sees in the pictures of those old martyrs, the same indescribable sadness one hears in the undertone of all beautiful music, that underlies a" most grand in

nature,—a sadness as terrible as it is undefinable; one feels it. And yet he does not look like a melancholy person in the least, but as though it came from the perfect, the rounded-out harmony of a nature that—”

Here the organ rolled in on Breta's analytical musings, arousing her to a sense of her surroundings. The services had commenced, and the choir were doing wonders, in spite of the absence of the leading contralto. They had been well drilled by the conscientious Mr. Whyte, and the music was well chosen.

It was during the *Venite Exultemus* that Breta, seeing de Grey's hands held no prayer-book,—she did not lift her eyes to his face,—asked Mr. Blitson, the tenor, in a whisper, at the last chord of the amen, to hand him one.

Mr. Blitson, with a bow of assent, handed the book to a pretty young lady who had come with Mrs. Strong, the second soprano; she accepting it with a brilliant blush.

Taking another book from the rack, Breta, not to be balked in her charitable purpose, advanced toward de Grey, while the choir were in the rustle of taking their seats. Half rising, de Grey, in the easiest manner possible, reached

out his hand for the book, which was not a small one, and was metal-clasped and metal-cornered, and, just as his fingers touched it, it fell to the floor with a clang.

As Breta instinctively stooped to pick it up, a hand was before her,—a hand large and shapely, that securely grasped the book. As hurriedly as she had stooped, she arose again ; her head coming in contact with a hard, unyielding substance that could only be de Grey's head.

Almost blinded with the tears forced from her eyes by the concussion, Breta cast a hasty glance, not at de Grey, but around the church, through the millions of stars that danced before her eyes, as she retreated to her seat. But she could not see that any one had observed any thing unusual. No one seemed to be attempting to conceal behind handkerchiefs or fans the smiles that must not be openly seen in church.

This was a solace to her wounded head, to which she now stealthily raised her hand, finding to her satisfaction that the new bump lay securely hidden under the fluffy waves of her abundant hair.

Breta sang her solo with all her accustomed *maestria*; with tones pure, just, and well sustained; and with accents that showed that the composition of the great composer was not only rendered with musical exactness, from conscientious and intelligent study, but that it came, as well, from the singer's heart, as though it might have been an improvisation of her own.

It was not until she had finished singing that, feeling her eyes attracted to a certain point, Breta looked past the many strangers (there were always a number of strangers at church, mostly from New York, attracted by the singing) to the right side of the nave, a little back, and encountered the eyes of Noel Dunraven fastened upon her.

His being in church was not an unusual circumstance, for during the three years that Breta had been at Miss Rutherford's he was accustomed to spend most of his Sundays at Lea; to hear his cousin Breta sing, as he said. But the expression in his blue eyes was a new one to Breta, well acquainted as she was with all the looks she had seen his eyes wear; and it not only puzzled, but troubled her.

He had been watching her from the first; that she understood. He had seen all that had occurred, her confusion and distress (so well concealed from others), noting it all critically, not sympathetically; that she also understood. What she did not understand was the odd shade, something cold, almost cruel, that had crept into his eyes; and at intervals, during the rest of the service, her glance reverted unconsciously to him, and always to meet the same watchful look.

"My dear," said Mr. Whyte, when they were out on the green before the church, "your tones in that inspiration of Handel's actually moved me to tears. However much I may get mixed up on ghosts, I never do in music; and I declare, as I have many times before, you have the divine gift of song."

"It is a source of great consolation to me to be able to cause you to shed tears," returned Breta, mischievously. "But let us hurry on Uncle Ray, dear."

In coming out of church Breta had observed that Dunraven, contrary to his wont, had not joined them; but she forgot to consider on the strangeness of it in her dread of encountering

de Grey, to whom her eyes had not once glanced since the dropping of the book, and its consequences. And again she urged her uncle to haste.

"I was rather loitering, my dear," replied he, "on de Grey's account, as I wish to make you acquainted with him, for he is an advent in this world of puerilities. As much so as even the immortal Handel's music."

"Do not let him hear you, Uncle Ray," urged Breta in a low voice, as she hurried on.

"He is back in the church-yard still, looking at the inscriptions on the tombs; but when he overtakes us—"

"Which I trust will not be. Let us walk faster, Miss Rutherford will be waiting I am cer—"

"Why, my dear!" broke in Mr. Whyte, examining his niece's flushed face in astonishment. "What has de Grey done that you should wish to avoid him? I saw you hand him a book in the first part of the service."

"Oh, don't, Uncle Ray, dear, but do come on," exclaimed Breta, desperately.

"Oh, certainly, my dear," acquiesced Mr. Whyte, who, unable to fathom the subtleties of

a young lady's motive of action long since, gave up the conundrum in the present instance, and trotted nimbly beside his niece, asking her, with one of his twisted smiles, if she thought of practising for a walking match.

"Uncle Ray," was Breta's reply, as she still hastened forward, "you must hold yourself in readiness to attend our picnic ; all the grandees of Lea are invited."

Mr. Whyte, accepting the change of subject, made some cheerful remarks about the picnic, and then wondered where Noel could have strolled to ; asking Breta if she had not noticed him in church.

"Yes, I saw him," replied Breta, the unwonted look in his eyes again recurring to her, but for an instant only, she being occupied with another troubling subject—for, hearing footsteps, she felt certain that de Grey was just back of them and was gaining upon them, and the bump loomed up in her mind again as prominently as it stood on her head, concealed in the fluff of her hair.

"If he should have a similar one, with no bang to hide it," irreverently thought she, "on the organ of causality perhaps !" It was

not to be thought of, and yet she continued to let her thought feast upon the harrowing idea.

She turned several shades paler as she looked up to acknowledge de Grey's salutation, as, joining them, with no show of haste, he was introduced to her by Mr. Whyte with the courtly air of an old-time gentleman.

Meeting only a respectful bow from de Grey, his brow as smooth as alabaster, his look calm to serenity,—a look so utterly ignoring the bumps of this bumping world that Breta, mentally recording him as one possessing the soul of a true gentleman, felt all her nervous apprehensions dissipated as by magic; and she chatted freely with him until they came to the neat little village park where Miss Rutherford's teachers and pupils were accustomed to re-assemble.

There, beside Miss Rutherford, his tall form conspicuous far above her tall form, stood Dunraven in a magnificent attitude, the evident admiration of her pupils.

He was conversing with Miss Rutherford with his customary grace and *savoir-vivre*; and when Breta, her uncle, and de Grey joined them, his bow to Breta and his distinguished

manner in recognizing his uncle's presentation to him of de Grey, threw the quiet, unassuming de Grey entirely into the shade in the opinion of most of the fair pupils, who, sitting on the park benches, or standing in groups, were awaiting the last of their number.

"Is n't he a love?" whispered Miss Beebe to Miss Rivers.

"Which he?" asked Miss Rivers.

"Why, Mr. Dunraven, of course. Such distinguished manners! Such a bearing—so very tall and elegant! Oh, he's just too lovely for any thing."

"I have heard you make that same remark, Lina Beebe, nearly every Sunday for three years," returned Miss Rivers, scornfully. "For my part," she added, "I think Mr. de Grey is handsomer by far, just tall enough,"—she was tall herself. "*He* is what I call quietly elegant."

Meanwhile, the subjects of this and similar snatches of conversation were making themselves agreeable. Dunraven, who, after a few words to Breta, finding her occupied with de Grey, having turned to Miss Amanda Rutherford, was entertaining her with an account of

some Congressional doings during his late visit to Washington; at the same time keeping his blue eyes on Breta.

Miss Rutherford, after several civil speeches to de Grey, seated herself, and began discussing some sacred music with Mr. Whyte, in view to her semi-monthly musicale.

"I cannot tell you what pleasure your singing gave me to-day, Miss Garnet," said de Grey.

Everybody had always gone in raptures over Breta's singing, but there was that in de Grey's tone, so full of an underlying power, causing his words to sound so little like a commonplace compliment, that she felt singularly stirred by them.

"I was prepared by what Mr. Black told me, —he heard you sing in Milan, Miss Garnet," —continued de Grey, "and also by what your uncle said, to hear—a remarkable voice. But I was in nowise prepared for—for just what I heard, so excelling every thing I ever thought possible in singing."

Again it was the single-hearted candor of tone that made the words seem so significant, and so difficult to respond to. Breta was spared the necessity of reply further than the inclina-

tion of head and little smile she had given him, as the expected pupils came up and Miss Rutherford started the procession in motion.

Mr. Whyte and de Grey bowed their leave ; but Dunraven walked on with Breta and Miss Rutherford, punctiliously taking the side of the latter.

Arriving at the seminary, Dunraven chatted a few moments, in the presence of Miss Rutherford, with those of the young ladies to whom he had been introduced at her musicales, thereby causing a severe fluttering of Miss Beebe's very admiring heart.

Later on, finding himself alone with Breta, in the seminary parlor, he compelled silent admiration from her with his brilliant description of his Washington visit. He confined himself so exclusively to generalities that she was conversing unreservedly with him until, rising, he walked across the stately parlor and stood before the grim portrait of a Rutherford ancestor, for a moment.

"Breta," said he, returning and seating himself beside her in elegant pose, "either I am the most patient, long-suffering man in the world, or you the most charming woman. I

am persuaded both are true : I, the only man in the universe whose love would not have died a natural death years ago—for how can love live with nothing to feed upon? And that you are the most charming of your sex goes without saying, for, before the vividness of your beauty all other beautiful faces near you grow dim. And notwithstanding all your friendly coldness and cruelty to me I love you more this day than ever before,—and my whole life has been one long dream of love for you.”

“Did you compose that, Noel, as you stood before Miss Rutherford’s grandfather?” asked Breta, with keen irony of tone.

“I can wait as long as Jacob—that other long-suffering man,” continued Dunraven, as though Breta had not spoken. “But I must have my Rachel in the end. There! Do not reply, Breta, *cugina mia*. There is no call for a reply.”

Breta had stirred and had lifted her face again. It was very pale, and there was a cold, unresponsive look in her eyes that visibly affected Dunraven, and he made haste to add, with a light laugh :

“Recollect, you have not refused me, Breta.

Excuse me, but do not say a word, I entreat."

Breta, raising her calm eyes and resting them full upon his face, had parted her lips and drawn her breath as though about to speak.

"Much as I love the sound of your sweet voice, *cugina mia*, I do not care to hear it now. I can get along quite well without—a mitten," continued he, with an easy lightness of tone and a light laugh. "I go, as heretofore, with the benefit of a doubt to—cheer me." And with this little parting jibe, Dunraven, rising, extended his hand to Breta, and taking hers, carried it to his lips in foreign fashion, and gracefully bowed himself out of the room.

VI.

IN THE FOREST-GLOAMING.

“**Y**OU must give no lessons this afternoon Miss Garnet,” said Miss Rutherford the next day after dinner. “You are looking pale, and I see you have eaten almost nothing since yesterday. The sun evidently was too much for you.”

“The two sons were too much for me,” parenthetically thought Breta.

“The philosopher has not written,” continued Miss Rutherford, “who has explained why our hottest days come on Sunday. By the way, my dear, I invited Mr. Dunraven to our picnic. He is an uncommonly fine young man, of whom any one may well be proud. I was never more impressed by his bearing than I was yesterday.”

Left to herself, with the afternoon before her, Breta sought the rest she certainly so much needed, in the shade of the woods. And never

before had she so well understood the meaning of the sermon preached by bird, bee, blossom, and running water.

She sat on the mossy bank, watching the dace and minnow dart and glide, and now and then a speckled trout rise suddenly up through the clear water, in which the feathery blue gentian and delicately articulated brake were mirrored. Or, reclining against some giant tree, that had stood in stately grandeur for ages, she watched the flickering lights and shadows through its branches, and the time passed lazily and refreshingly by.

"I will wait until that splendid brown thrasher is through his song, and then I will go," thought she.

The thrush and she were both startled by a crunching of dead twigs, and looking around she beheld a huge Newfoundland dog coming rapidly toward her.

Rising to her feet she saw the dog came with no hostile intent, but in imperative supplication, as he looked at her with præter-canine, almost human eyes of entreaty, slowly wagging his great bushy tail, and gently pulling at the skirt of her dress.

Following the dog's lead into a bridle-path, a turn in the path revealed a sight that made Breta's heart stand still.

"Is he dead?" she ejaculated. But there was no one to reply but the dog, and he seemed to be asking the same question.

After a moment of almost paralyzed terror Breta stooped down and interrogated first the wrist, then the heart of the apparently breathless form prone on the leafy ground,—the form of the very one of whom she had been thinking while listening to the lay of the brown thrasher,—and to her inexpressible relief, beneath her own pulsing fingers she felt the slow beats of an almost extinguished life.

"Water!" she exclaimed, rising quickly to her feet. "What can I find that will hold water?"

Solemnly and appealingly the great dog, with his honest brown eyes, looked into her face, and then went on licking his master's hands.

Breta caught some leaves from the bough of a tree, and crowding them flat-wise into her straw hat, and holding them down tightly with her hand, she managed to bring from the stream close by sufficient water to drench his face and hair.

This she repeated again and again, stopping only to chafe his hands and face,—the dog looking on intently, with every now and then a low whine,—until at last the object of her solicitous efforts opened his eyes.

“Thank heaven, Mr. de Grey, you have come to!” fervently ejaculated Breta, with a great sigh of relief. “I thought you never would revive.”

“You, Miss Garnet!” and de Grey, rising to a sitting posture, repeated: “You, Miss Garnet! Please tell me what it means. I do not seem to recollect myself.”

“You have been thrown from your horse, Mr. de Grey—I see him standing there,—and your head struck on that piece of rock,” said Breta, stooping down to examine the spot where his head had been. “It is a smoothly-worn stone embedded in the moss, or otherwise it might have cut your head severely.” And Breta passed her little ungloved hand softly over the mossy stone again. “I was in the woods close by,” continued she, replying to his still asking eyes, “and your dog found me and brought me to you. Tell me, if you can, what I shall do for you. Shall I go for a physician?”

"I think, Miss Garnet," returned he, "you have proved yourself the best physician I could have had, and my opinion is you have saved my life. Let me see what I can do to help myself before accepting your solicitous offer. You look pale. I am sorry to have been the occasion of such a fright to you. My worst injury is a large protuberance near the back of my head." De Grey, speaking very lightly to make light of his hurt, was now standing on his feet, his hand on that part of his head where phrenologists locate caution.

In the midst of her apprehensions for him, Breta felt herself flushing, as, with dismay, she mentally exclaimed: "Another new bump!"

Instantly accusing herself of lightness and inconsiderateness, and feeling fearful he was not so far recovered as he wished to make it seem, Breta insistingly proposed going to Elmwood, near at hand, to fetch her uncle.

"If, Miss Garnet," replied de Grey, leaning against the trunk of a tree and looking frightfully pale, "you could bring me a draught of water from the same source with which you so mercifully and bountifully baptized my face, I think I could manage to get home. I find this dizziness still hangs over me."

"Most gladly. But I have only my hat." And she held it up all dripping.

"Hold! I have a leathern drinking-cup in my pocket. You *are*, then, the veritable Undine I thought you when I opened my eyes and beheld you in the forest-gloaming through glistening water-drops? I saw Herr Adrian cook eggs in a felt hat; but I doubt if even his necromancy could make a little straw-hat hold water," said de Grey, as he handed her the cup.

When she returned with it filled, de Grey was sitting on a fallen log, looking still very pale, and he again regretted the trouble he was giving her.

"I beg you not to speak in that way, Mr. de Grey. I would walk leagues to—Mr. de Grey you are looking alarmingly pale." And as Breta relinquished to his grasp the yielding leathern cup, so difficult to manage, her soft, warm fingers were accidentally clasped for an instant by his hand.

Breta in that instant felt the blood from her heart rush to her fingers' ends and glow in her cheeks; and de Grey, as he drank the water, declared himself wonderfully revived.

"And no marvel," added he, "that water,

being furnished you by your Uncle Kühleborn, was enchanted, having great magnetic virtue in it. I feel now quite able to walk."

Giving no hint of his consciousness that the enchantment lay in the touch of her magnetic fingers, de Grey again assured Breta he was well enough to walk. Her confusion gone, she was able to meet his eyes, and proposed accompanying him to Elmwood.

"Uncle Ray will be only too glad to drive me home again," urged she, "and I am really too terrified to think of your going alone."

"Your kindness is only exceeded by my gratitude, Miss Garnet," returned de Grey.

"And you will ride," said Breta, smiling at his words. "I am quite used to horses and can readily catch yours and bring him to you, Mr. de Grey."

"I will walk if you will permit me, Miss Garnet; Selim will come to my call and follow like a dog."

As they moved on, the horse appearing quite dejected, the Newfoundland, deliberately forsaking his master, went to the other side of Breta, looking from time to time up into her face.

"Ulysses will always owe you allegiance, Miss Garnet; he never forgets a friend—or a foe." And de Grey related several anecdotes of the dog's great sagacity.

"Your horse, Mr. de Grey, is a beauty. Selim do you call him? He really looks sorry, as though he understood what he had done. But he should have known better than to throw you."

"I will tell him so when I get him alone, and he will be ashamed of himself. It is his first offence." And from Selim and Ulysses they went to other topics; and by the time they reached Elmwood, Breta thought she had never spent so delightful a half hour.

"My dear," said Mr. Whyte to her, on their way back to the school, "young de Grey thinks to systematize those ghosts; but I tell him no philosophy dug out of the past or eliminated from the present, can ever systematize a ghost, the most unreliable, the most—"

"Mr. de Grey is surely of sound mind, Uncle Ray, is he not?" marvelled Breta.

"None sounder. He has studied rosicrucian lore, young as he is, so deeply, that he fairly makes my head spin to hear him talk of

his 'Three Fires,' and 'Dissolvents,' and 'Internal Illuminations,' and 'Calcinations.'"

"I can well understand that, Uncle Ray; for when I was studying Harmony, the technical expressions continually posed me. I could comprehend the prohibition of consecutive fifths (unless managed as adroitly as Beethoven and Chopin manage them) both by their sound to the ear as well as by the rule. But speaking of consecutive fifths as the quint succession was at first very puzzling. And also that the Monophonic tone-chain, and the Duophonic, Triphonic, Tetraphonic, and Polyphonic, meant no more than one-voiced, two-voiced, and so on, compositions. And as for the Ecclesiastical keys—the Ionian, Dorian, Myxolidian, and the rest,—they were a perfect *mix*, until of a sudden I saw how simple they really are, although differing from our modern quint circle, in which the progression of keys is always a fifth distant from the preceding one."

"My dear," it is always the technicalities of science that are more difficult to surmount than the science itself. There must be some boundary line hard to cross, or everybody would know as much as the teachers"; and Mr. Whyte

looked at his niece with his twisted smile. "But de Grey seems to have studied them all," continued he,—“sciences, arts, and technicalities. Not that he attempts to show off; he really seems so unconscious of how much he has learned and thought, that it is quite refreshing to meet one so little egotistical. But somehow what he knows seems to radiate from him when he is talking with—”

“With any one like yourself, Uncle Ray, who also has studied so profoundly. You should hear what Miss Rutherford says. She has great reverence for the mass of information you have acquired on all scientific subjects, especially music,” said Breta, proudly.

“Except the science of ghosts, Breta. When it comes to ghosts, I—but concerning de Grey’s philosophy of ghosts,—or unseen powers as he calls them. He has based his theory on the opinions taught by Socrates, Plato, and the subsequent rosicrucians (not that they taught or wrote about ghosts at all), and has studied Jacob Boehme and all the modern metaphysical writers (not that any of these write about ghosts either, for they do not); but the result of all his studies combined, has been to develop a pre-

conceived opinion of his own on the subject, which seems to be, that a more rapid development in religion, science, and art can be attained, than has yet been dreamed of in the present crude state of the world, through the co-agency of the unseen world, and by means of some philosophico-scientific process that I cannot exactly comprehend (I always do get mixed up on ghosts), which, causing the spiritual and physical worlds to coalesce, will produce this happy result. But he needs a house, such as the one he has just purchased, in which to work, you see."

"Excuse me, Uncle Ray, I do not see. And I should say Mr. de Grey had better let the unseen world and the unseen powers alone until the time comes for him to see them. A higher development is all the time gradually coming. There is scarcely a day that we do not hear of some grand scientific discovery, or some great invention,—such as, only a day or two ago, this wonderful telephone."

"My dear, *some* of the modern philosophers go so far as to assert that every discovery or invention that is effected, proceeds from—directly from ghosts ; in short, that we are noth-

ing of ourselves, except as ghosts speak, act, and think through us."

"Does Mr. de Grey believe any thing so—so preposterous as that?" exclaimed Breta, aghast.

"Far from it, my dear. He believes nothing of that sort. Do not look so shocked. *That* is no part of his belief. But he goes further than I can when he asserts that ghosts (or unseen powers) can be systematized and utilized."

"Now, Uncle Ray, dear, we all know that many strange things have been, such as the unaccountable occurrences that transpired in the family of John Wesley, for instance—"

"And in that Elmwood house we have just left, for instance," interrupted her uncle.

"All these are bad enough or good enough, as people think, when they come of themselves," resumed Breta. "But going in search of the supernatural I should think would unfit any one—it would me—for the natural occurrences of life. Besides all that, we are expressly warned against hunting after signs and wonders. And now that we understand the real significance of the injunction concerning the sign of the prophet Jonah, it should be as much respected by us as

it was not by those perverse old Jews to whom it was given."

"My dear little niece, your opinion is without doubt a correct one, but your elucidation of it, like those of more profound metaphysicians on other subtle questions, is as clear as mud."

"You may laugh at me, Uncle Ray," said Breta, with a bright smile.

"My dear, if I laugh," replied Mr. Whyte, with his twisted smile, "it is at the ignorance of the learned, who, in trying to make things clear, make nothing clear but that they do not understand their own subject. Dropping all this, de Grey made me acquainted with the principles of the rosicrucian faith, interesting me beyond measure. Not a word of ghosts, mark you. The Rosy-cross-men were simply philosophers in search of the truth, and they were obliged to conceal the truths at which they arrived under symbols, and numerical figures; as any ennobling truth divulged in those heathenish days meant—to those who permeated these truths—persecution, by the besottedly ignorant and prejudiced priests; for the most part ending in death. Their philosopher's stone, in its fullest interpretation,

meant man. Calling it 'gold,' it was typical, in the religious sense, of God's love and wisdom, also of truth ; and in the scientific sense it was typical of the perfection in chemical and astronomical achievement at which they aimed. That we owe our religious freedom to the indefatigable efforts of those martyrs of the hermetic school, is quite certain ; and that the study of hermetic lore should enchant and engross the mind of a young man of intelligence and leisure, like young de Grey, I can well conceive. But how he is going to apply those profound teachings of the past toward systematizing the capers of the ghosts of the present, is, as I have said, beyond my fathoming. But when it comes to ghosts,—as I have so often said,—I never do know, I get things mixed up so."

VII.

“SOMETHING IS GOING TO COME OUT OF ALL THIS.”

AS Mr. Whyte and Breta drove up the seminary carriage-way after “tea,” as the evening meal was called, although every one in the establishment, except the servants, drank milk in preference to the celestial beverage, Mr. Whyte commented in his roseate way on the various merry groups of girls they passed on the lawn, who were engaged at croquet and lawn tennis.

They found Miss Rutherford enjoying the cool breeze on the front veranda; and Mr. Whyte, being held in high esteem by her as teacher of Harmony and Acoustics in her school, and as adviser and help when she had any musical doings on hand, was cordially greeted by her. He stopped but a moment, and with a parting salutation to her and Breta,

and a modest little bow to the young ladies on the lawn, as he passed them, he drove on.

Breta, after supping alone, joined a knot of the older girls on the lawn, who were listening to an animated discussion between Frank and Pella.

"It's ghosts we're talking about, Miss Breta; does not each particular hair on all our heads stand on end?" said Sadie Burrill—the same who had breakfasted on apple-pie with Frank on Sunday.

"I should like to know why we may not talk of them, after the long lecture Miss Rutherford gave us on ghosts this afternoon, while you were away, Miss Breta," exclaimed Frank. "She told us that—"

"A lecture from Miss Rutherford on ghosts!" said Breta, smiling, as she looked questioningly from one to another.

"She said that these things are, and—"

"That ghosts are!" again interrupted Breta. "Did Miss Rutherford affirm the actual reality of—"

"Of course she did not, Miss Breta," said Pella Morton, in high falsetto. "Miss Rutherford never mentioned the word ghost during

the few remarks she made, which Frank, with her remarkable faculty for twisting things, affirms. She said that owing to certain electrical atmospheric conditions, telephonic sounds from time to time had been produced in certain localities unexplainable to our present comprehension. And that when these psychical or physical subtleties, which (too well authenticated to doubt) had existed through all the world's history, could be better understood, a natural and scientific explanation would be found for all these seeming marvels. She cited the mirages of the deserts, wherein cities miles off are reflected so perfectly as to deceive and mislead travellers, and gave us the scientific elucidation of these natural phenomena. She wound up by cautioning us that nothing can be more ruinous to all practical aims in life than to permit the mind to get swamped in the mazes and marvels of what is affirmed to be performed by agencies who have departed this life."

"There, now! if that is n't ghosts, what is it?" exclaimed Frank. "I for one am free to say that I am afraid of ghosts, and no elucidation, however scientific, could ever make me do any thing but shudder at the thought even of

hearing sounds for which I cannot account, or of seeing some one all of a sudden appear and then vanish into thin air. The telephone is a wonderful discovery, and when it carries sounds from one human being to another, is very interesting. But I like to know who is at the other end of the wire. Carrying on a telephonic conversation with a ghost is not to *my* mind. I agree with Horace that *nec scire fas est omnia*. It would be as much as my *nec* is worth to say nothing of my *scire's* to have any thing to do with scientific ghosts, or ghosts that do not even know the alphabet. I am glad you have sold *your* ghosts, Miss Breta,—which was the occasion, or were the occasion (bother grammar! I don't know which it is) of all that has been said."

Pella Morton was continuing the subject; but Frank, twining her arm lovingly around Breta's waist, asked her if she would not go and sit under the willows for a little while, as she had something very particular to say to her.

"Just see how Frank manages Miss Breta," said Pella Morton, breaking off from her remarks and turning up her pretty Greek nose

contemptuously. "If Miss Breta could only realize how entirely deceitful Frank is—"

"Frank has no more deceit in her than—"

"Than you have, Sadie Burrill," interrupted Pella, with a little spiteful laugh.

"If it were not mean to be personal, Pella," returned Sadie, "I could prove who is deceitful. I do not consider the little affair of yesterday any test of deceit, as Frank and I did that for a piece of fun, and every one of you all knew of it."

"Including Miss Rutherford," said Pella, with another little laugh.

"Pella, I won't talk with you any more about it," and as Sadie turned to go, Pella, with another little laugh, exclaimed :

"Sadie Burrill, I see, is more afraid to face the truth than to perpetrate 'a piece of fun,' as she calls it."

But Sadie, without hazarding a reply, walked over toward a group who were playing tennis ; looking admiringly, as she went, down at her handsome friend Frank, who, at that moment, seated on a log beside Breta, with one brown hand paddling in the limpid water of the brook, was saying :

"Something is going to come out of all this." 105

"Now, Breta, darling (Frank always dropped the prefix of Miss to Breta's name, when they were together alone, having told her punningly that she loved her too well to *Miss* her except when she must), you know, for I've said so, often, that you alone can put a head on me. I am glad to be able to swallow pride, and acknowledge that I was all wrong yesterday. I am so proud and hateful and obstinate that no one could ever get me to do any thing or learn any thing; and I should have been worse than ever here if it had not been for you, Breta, dear. You influenced me straight along. It has been three years now, you were sixteen and a half and I was sixteen and a half—you might have been sixty and I six, for the difference in our acquirements. I did not realize it then, but know it now, and mamma fully understands it. She noticed the improvement in me every time I went home."

"Why, Frances; why, dear Frank, how can you? It was nothing. You have exaggerated it all."

"Foolish, am I not?" exclaimed Frank, wiping from her eyes the moisture that had collected in them, and laughing at the same

time. "Who ever would have believed it, and of *me*? But what I say is true, and mamma wished to give you a grand present when you were home with me at Easter. But I would not let her wound you by any thing so patronizing. I said to her: 'Suppose *I* should be good and lovely and fond of study and doing the right thing and that, would you like every one to be sending me costly gifts on account of it?' And then mamma subsided. And now you 've had my confession, I can only say that once wild horses could n't have wrung it from me."

"I doubt if any thing could *wring* any confession from you, Frank. But pray don't make any more to me."

"Agreed, for it is time now for you to confess. What is it that has changed you so, since yesterday? Your whole look is different, Breta."

"I know of no change in myself, you absurd Frank. But let me thank you for preventing your mother from making me a costly gift. It *would* have wounded me."

"Whom did you see at church yesterday, Breta?" abruptly asked Frank. "I mean whom

besides your everlasting cousin Noel? He is always there; I have no patience with him."

"What, for going to church?" asked Breta.
"Poor Noel!"

"Breta, why do you let that—why do you permit Noel Dunraven to hang around you so year after year?"

"Is this the confession you wished me to make?"

"Do you intend to marry him?"

"Is that the confession you wished me to make?"

"Breta, you pretend to be my friend—are you?"

"Is that the con—"

"For heaven's sake don't say that over again! You pretend to tell me every thing, and yet, no matter how much I plead, you will say nothing about Noel Dunraven. I know no more of him—of your feelings toward him than—. Is he—?"

"He is my uncle's nephew."

"Do you love him?"

"Should I not love my uncle's nephew?"

"Breta, you are awful. But we'll drop him. I do not intend you shall marry *him* any way.

Now tell me about the other. Clara Rivers is wild about him. But I've no faith in *her*. Now for the confession."

"The other! What other, Frank?"

"De Grey—the gentleman who bought Elmwood. Was n't he there?"

"Yes, Uncle Ray introduced him to me."

"Is Mr. de Grey young or old?"

"He is twenty-six, Uncle Ray told me."

"Is he handsome?"

"Remarkably so."

"How did the music go?"

"We missed your contralto, but otherwise Uncle Ray said the music went — went as usual."

"What did you sing?"

"'I know that my Redeemer liveth.'"

"Ah, I know how that was sung; and what did Mr. de Grey say?"

"He joined with Uncle Ray in approving the music."

"What happened this afternoon when you were out? Did you see Mr. de Grey again?"

"Frank, you are equal to a whole court of lawyers with your cross-questions. Let us go up to the house."

"Breta, why did you come home with your Uncle Ray, and so late in the afternoon, unless you were at the old place, where de Grey undoubtedly was?"

"Your imagination is entirely too active, Frank, and for fear it may run off in the wrong direction I will set you right. Whilst down in the woods over there a large dog came and asked me to go with him. He took me to his master, who had been thrown from his horse and was insensible. I dashed water in his face and chafed his hands, which revived him. I then accompanied him to the old place, fearing he might need further assistance."

"And that was de Grey," said Frank. She scrutinized Breta closely, but as Breta met the look with her clear blue-gray eyes full of the same steadfast, tender light that always shone in them, with no attempt at avoiding her intent look, Frank asked:

"Was it Mr. de Grey's proposition to accompany him?"

"It was mine, Frank. Is the catechism over?"

"Then you saved Mr. de Grey's life. That seems to be the long and the short of it. The

size of it, I should have said," and Frank threw her eyes mischievously at Breta, with a laugh.

"Mr. de Grey said so," said Breta, quietly. "But very possibly he might have revived without assistance."

"And very probably he would not. Those suspensions of life have to be met very promptly, or—"

"At all events I was terribly alarmed. And the feeling of relief was unspeakable when he opened his eyes."

Both were silent for a few moments. At length Frank asked :

"Did you see any thing, or hear any thing from any of your—no, Mr. de Grey's—"

"I have never once heard the slightest unaccountable noise in that house, often as I have been there, during the three years I have been back from Europe. I think as Miss Rutherford does about—the noises."

"And that they are not—"

"I never thought them disembod—I have really never given the subject any serious thought."

"Was Mr. de Grey recovered from his fall?"

"He seemed to be, though still fearfully pale.

"Something is going to come out of all this." 111

He insisted on helping Uncle Ray harness his horse."

"Has Mr. de Grey no groom there?"

"No; his servants refused to go to what they called a 'haunted house.' Mr. de Grey gave me quite an amusing description, on the way there, of their fears. He attends to his horse and helps Uncle Ray cook, and seems to enjoy it highly. Some women are hired by the day to sweep and clean up, and that sort of thing. He and Uncle Ray have taken a great fancy to each other; they get along admirably together."

"I should think your Uncle Ray would have been glad enough to get away after he had sold your place."

"It was at Mr. de Grey's urgent request that he remained; they suit each other exactly. Mr. de Grey has commenced lessons on the violin, or cello, rather, with Uncle Ray. And although he studied in Europe, he considers Uncle Ray's method superior to that of the great master he was with—as severe, and at the same time with a broader comprehension of the true art."

"Then Mr. de Grey is a musician?"

"A fine one, Uncle Ray told me. His instrument is the cello, I believe I said so."

"Breta, dear, I have something to say—a prophecy to make."

"You quite alarm me, Frank, you are so mysterious; but say on," said Breta, with a laugh.

"I am not the seventh daughter of the seventh daughter, and I was n't born with a Baxter's effectual call on my head (I quote Lowell, you know), but I always could tell things. Mamma has often called me a witch, I have told so many things that have come true; I probably have the divine gift of prophecy. Well, I feel a presentiment that something is going to come out of all this, and you will see if my prediction is not verified."

"Something usually comes out of every thing, I believe," returned Breta, laughing; "but what is this wonderful thing that is going to come out of all this, and what is all this?"

"You know what I mean, Breta."

"Indeed, Frank, I have not the least conception."

"Does Mr. de Grey," asked Frank, "expect to work out, to elucidate, or whatever it is—

well, to reduce to a science the comings and goings of those—what I heard was, that he is a rosicrucian, or sorcerer, or something of that sort," she added, looking mischievously at Breta.

"My dear Frank, I have no sympathy with this," said Breta, seriously. "When the time comes for the unseen world to reveal its secrets, it will be done without the aid of—"

"Of alembic, crucible, powwows, and all that fanfarade of magic," interrupted Frank, with one of her heartiest laughs. "But seriously, Breta, if he is in the wrong it is for you to set him right. That is your mission in this world—to put a head on people. Everybody grows better where you are, you are so right and true yourself—so earnestly simple and so simply in earnest, and—"

"There, Frank, please stop."

"May I observe again that the end of all this has not yet come?" asked Frank, with a brilliant smile.

"Has the end of any thing come?"

"Breta, parry it as you will, it is inevitable! It will end as I predict! Now mark me." And Frank gave her head a significant series of

nods, expressing volumes more than her words, and which, as they always did, sent lights and shadows playing hide-and-seek in her raven hair.

"Frank, you are perfectly absurd."

"I always was."

"And if I did not at first understand you, I do of course now. Your seventh daughter divination is at fault. Nothing is more unlikely than the *end* you propose. I have other views for myself, Frank, and am going to devote myself to doing some good in the world. - I will tell you my project some day, for I have thought a great deal about it of late."

"'The best-laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-gley.' I will give you just three weeks to forget all about your project."

"I will give the skies just three weeks to fall in," said Breta, laughing, and shaking her wise young head.

"Let us go up to the house and get under cover. See, the dew is already falling fast—the skies may follow."

VIII.

ELMWOOD.

ELMWOOD, where, according to repute, ghosts held high carnival, lay about three miles farther down the spring-fed stream from that busy hive of yellow-haired and raven-haired bees—where Miss Rutherford, a model queen-bee, duly rewarded the workers and punished the drones.

Elmwood was, like the seminary, situated on a high hill ;—the village of Lea, through which wound the road, lying in the valley below, between the two sites.

On the day following, the warm June sun shone down on valley and hills, and all things, trees and flowers, butterflies and birds, feeling its vivifying influence, looked joyous,—all save the Cupids and Venuses at Elmwood. They, with their freshly washed faces—there had been a shower in the night,—were still as aslant and melancholy as ever.

Within doors Mr. Whyte with de Grey having just finished on violin and cello a long symphony, Mr. Whyte was saying:

“Not a squeak yet from a ghost! It is very strange. I should think Sebastian Bach might awaken some response from them if only to accommodate you, de Grey. If those old sorcerers relied on —”

“Reputed sorcerers, Mr. Whyte. In point of fact, earnest seekers after divine wisdom,” interposed de Grey.

“If those old magi relied on ghosts,—the most unreliable—”

“They relied solely on their own indefatigable labors for their results, and never on the viewless powers of the air.”

“It is all a myth to me, de Grey,—an oblong blur.”

“It is certainly very intangible,” returned de Grey, laughing. “Still, the idea of utilizing to scientific ends unseen forces, that the workers of the world may receive more potent skill—that you consider so Utopian,—is, I think, feasible, and may be carried out by certain chymical processes, experimental, in a place, such as this, where these phenomena have transpired.”

“Mr. de Grey, I can really say nothing on that point—whether it may or may not be Utopian,—as I have never given the subject any careful investigation. But I was going to add that if those old magi did rely on ghosts as their backers in pursuit of wisdom, it is no wonder that many of them got their heads turned and that their wits went wool-gathering.”

“My dear friend,” replied de Grey, breaking out into an irresistible laugh, “you do not view this subject fairly. Go with me to the station, it will be on your way to Miss Rutherford’s (did you not tell me two is your hour there?) and I will give you a few facts that, as you say, you have evidently not studied. I must take the cars to the city, as I wish to see Black, and shall not be back here until to-morrow.”

And de Grey, as bright and fresh and genial as though he possessed no musty hermetic parchments above-stairs over which he pored—though still with that shade of sadness on his face, most visible in the solemn lustre of his large, luminous eyes,—commenced his arrangements for going, by carefully putting away his cello in its case.

Mr. Whyte, replacing his violin caressingly in its case with still greater care, signified to de Grey how pleased he would be to drive him to the station, and looking at his time, he opened the back of his watch (a handsome repeater), asking de Grey if he recognized the face within.

"It is Prince Konigsberg, the great Prussian diplomat, is it not?"

"The same. When he was in Milan he almost lived at my house," returned Mr. Whyte. "He is extravagantly fond of music, especially of the violin. I could never play enough for him. He sent me this, with the miniature within," continued Mr. Whyte, with modest pride. "The painting is by a celebrated German artist."

"With regard to your violin, Mr. Whyte, Konigsberg and I can shake hands," responded de Grey.

On their way to the station, instead of talking on the proposed subject, Mr. Whyte, who chanced to relate an anecdote of his niece Breta's early life, was led on by de Grey to tell another and another; these characteristic episodes of Miss Garnet's juvenile career, seeming

to interest him more than the hermetic philosophy that had absorbed so much of his life.

"On one occasion," continued little Mr. Whyte, warming with his subject, "I had been wavering between two violins selected from many, both Cremonas, and I was trying first one and then the other, when Breta—she was then five years old—in her child's way said: 'Uncle Ray, that one sounds just as though you had put your pocket-handkerchief over it, and this one sounds as though you had taken your handkerchief away from it; I love this one the best,'—and the little thing took it in her arms and kissed it. I considered her judgment a good one, and purchased it at once. I afterward ascertained, by the merest chance, its history: It is a genuine Stradivarius, made at Cremona by Stradivarius the father,—you know there were only two makers of that name, father and son."

"It is by far the finest-toned instrument I ever heard, Mr. Whyte, and does credit to Miss Breta's choice. I don't marvel that you value it. Can that be my train whistling?"

It could be and was the train, and de Grèy had barely time to "catch it," as Mr. Whyte de-

clared, by running at full speed the length of the platform, they driving up just as the conductor shouted: "All aboard!"

Having finished with his classes, Mr. Whyte sent up for Breta to take a drive with him.

"I had just finished my last lesson," said she, as they drove off. "It was Frank Bowers', and she sang magnificently. But what a handsome horse! Ah! I see, it is Mr. de Grey's Selim. He's a beauty. But what have you done with Flash? And where's Mr. de Grey?"

"Flash is in his stable, and de Grey is in New York by this time. We will take Flash with us when we go to New York, my dear,—do you not say so?"

"Certainly we will; Flash is a little darling; we could not get along without him; He is one of us. But, Uncle Ray, I do not intend being idle after we get to New York. I have a plan of life, and shall be very busy in carrying it out. I wish to talk with you about it some time—that is, more fully than I have; you know something of it,—"

"Yes, my dear, and approve of it; and I also have a plan, and we will see who can work the most indefatigably, you or I. And while we

are perfecting our plans we can hear all the operas and oratorios you have missed so much."

"You also, Uncle Ray. I am so glad you can live once more, somewhat as you were accustomed to, without being compelled to drudge; working hard at one's bent in life is n't drudgery. Fifty thousand dollars is, of course, a small sum in comparison to what we have lost; but we can live on it, and there is so much to be done in this world, and there are so many to help who need help;—that has become my one thought."

"For one thing, Breta, I shall take a large organ at a high salary; I have had offers from several of the leading churches of late, when down in the city. For another thing, I intend seeing to the investment of your fifty thousand dollars myself, and not let that go with the rest;—I have gained some wisdom through adversity."

"I shall hate to leave Miss Rutherford's, I have grown so at home there; new faces and strange places I always dread. But Frank will be in New York, you know, Uncle Ray; this is her last year. Miss Rutherford's without Frank will be dry enough. Shall you not miss your

wonderful concerts at Elmwood? Now, Uncle Ray, tell me truly, did you not dream all that ghost music?"

"My dear, am I dreaming now? Tell you truly? well then, truly I am not sure of any thing where ghosts are concerned. I would say: 'Yes, I dreamed it all,' but others—Mr. Black, you know—heard it."

"So he said, and yet for me the house has always been as mute as—as any other house."

"They have been ill behaved to so slight their mistress—that is, if they are, and if any thing is."

"Why do you turn in here, Uncle Ray?" asked Breta. "When will Mr. de Grey return? I would not meet him—that is, here for—for worlds."

"Have no fear, Joslyn de Grey is—"

"Joslyn? That is his name, then; I—I wondered what it might be. But as I said, I would not meet him here at Elmwood, for—"

"I assure you, my dear, there is not the slightest danger, as de Grey will not be back until to-morrow. I have his own words for it. I wish to show you some choice old scores that I received from Paris to-day. But I will take

them to the school if you prefer, and we will drive on."

"As there is no chance of Mr. de Grey's coming, let us look at them here," said Breta, conquering her reluctance.

They were deeply engaged in reading the scores, when, in a pause from Mr. Whyte's violin and Breta's voice, a rumbling of carriage wheels was heard.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Whyte, as he looked out of the window. "Here's a carriage full of ghosts—people I should say; and the head of one is the head of Joslyn de Grey to a dead certainty!"

"Mr. de Grey!" reiterated Breta, flushing scarlet and then turning pale. "Great heavens! Are you sure, Uncle Ray?" Breta wished to escape, but sat down again as hastily as she had risen, almost paralyzed with chagrin.

"Joslyn de Grey—or his ghost," returned her uncle. "The lady beside him is elegantly attired and very handsome. The young woman on the front seat is quite plain in features and dress. The carriage stops. The elegantly-attired lady is making curious signs with her fingers to the plain young woman, who is now

assisted down by the man that sat next the driver, and they are removing boxes from the carriage. The driver is taking trunks from the rack. The beautiful and elegantly-attired lady is coming up on the veranda, followed by de Grey and the plain young woman. Should they all be ghosts—”

“What I fear is, they are *not* ghosts,” said Breta, with energy, her heart half choking her with dismay.

“I must admit them whatever they are,” returned her uncle.

“Mr. Whyte, my sister Selma,” pronounced de Grey’s rich, full voice. Breta heard it from the room where she was sitting and turned still paler. “I met her at the station below Lea and so returned with her. Go in, Selma, with Mr. Whyte, while I see to your baggage.”

Miss de Grey, on her way through the wide hall, was telling Mr. Whyte that she had come to keep house for her brother while he pursued his studies.

“Very kind of you, Miss de Grey. Your brother will appreciate your goodness; he speaks of you frequently, and I feel myself quite acquainted with you. You will find the

house pretty lively at times, I assure you" said Mr. Whyte.

"I understand all about that, Mr. Whyte, but that cannot deter me, where I can be of assistance to Joslyn," affirmed Selma, enthusiastically, as, with an unaffected naturalness of manner, she entered the room where, pale to whiteness, and silent to immobility, Breta was now standing proud and erect, wishing herself miles away. Miss de Grey looked at Breta with slightly dilated eyes, as though she might be one of the shadows of the house in wait to receive her.

"My niece, Miss Garnet," said Mr. Whyte; "Breta, it is Mr. de Grey's sister, my dear."

Advancing with extended hand, her violet eyes beaming and quite restored to their natural size, Selma greeted Breta with effusion, kissing her on both cheeks.

"I am afraid Joslyn might have fared ill there in the woods," said she in a caressing tone that was irresistible, "had it not been for your timely assistance, my dear. He told me on the way here. I cannot thank you enough. We must be the best of friends."

Breta's equanimity returning with Miss de

Grey's warmth of manner, they seated themselves in the chairs Mr. Whyte, in his roseate way, offered them.

"I see, Miss Garnet," said Selma, "you are looking at Judith. Having made up my mind to come, I did not rest until I had hunted up Judith and her husband, whose great recommendation is—they are deaf and dumb."

"That—their being deaf—my uncle will tell you, Miss de Grey, will be a great blessing in this house," replied Breta, laughing, "on account of—"

"Of the strange noises," caught up Selma, quite seriously. "I could not endure the thought that Mr. Whyte and Joslyn were having to perform manual labor. Mr. Black told me no servant would stay in the house, and I think my deaf and dumb ones will prove invaluable."

As Selma spoke, de Grey entered the room, the dreamy warmth of his eyes lighting into a look of joyful recognition as his glance fell upon Breta. But he greeted her with a manner so free from surprise at finding her there, that again she blessed him in her heart for his perfect good-breeding.

"I am afraid, Selma," said he, laying his hand on her shoulder with brotherly fondness, as he stood up before her, "you will find the rooms too damp to sleep in without a day's sunshine to air them. Had I only known—"

"That is just what I intended to avoid, Joslyn," replied she, in her caressing tone. "Let us make a tour up stairs. Will you go, my dear?" and Miss de Grey put her arm lovingly around Breta's slender waist, and thus together they ascended the great oaken staircase; followed by Mr. Whyte, de Grey, and Judith, to whom Miss de Grey beckoned.

Windows were opened, and Selma could not sufficiently admire the massive, old-time furniture the light revealed. Great oaken chests of linen and presses of blankets and curtains received attention, and Selma declared that the rooms were not only delightful but in perfect order.

Mr. Whyte confessed to having had work-people from time to time brushing and cleaning; "always by the day, not one would stay over night," said he with his twisted smile, "but as the mansion is built of stone, and thoroughly well finished throughout with the

best material, and is well guarded by locks, bars, and bolts, it has suffered but little in the interior. It is the exterior, as I explained to Mr. Black, that shows the effects of time and mischievous boys."

During the investigation and the choice of her rooms by Selma, so many bright remarks were elicited that it seemed quite like an entertainment gotten up purposely.

When they returned below stairs, Judith was installed in the great kitchen, where her husband had built a roaring fire in the huge old-fashioned fireplace, before which the linen was to be aired, and at which Judith was to cook a substantial repast of viands Miss de Grey had taken the precaution to bring with her in certain covered baskets.

"But where are your strange noises, my dear Breta; I hear none." Miss de Grey had already dropped the Miss in Breta's favor, making much of her, as a lady of twenty-seven or eight may a valued friend much younger.

"Breta has never heard them, Miss de Grey," said Mr. Whyte. "She considers them merely dreams."

"Uncle Ray will tell you where he keeps

these—dreams, Miss de Grey,” returned Breta, adding: “I was wishing an hour or so ago that I was of the stuff of which dreams are made.”

“What, when we came, my dear Breta?” asked Selma.

“Just imagine, Miss de Grey: I being inveigled here with the bait of old music scores just from Paris, and under the solemn seal of assurance that the present owner of the house would not and could not be back here until to-morrow,—just imagine my alarm when the carriage drove up containing—”

“Is the present owner of the house, then, such a very alarming person, Miss Garnet?” asked de Grey, laughing.

“Very alarming,—on his own grounds,” said Breta.

“Oh, Joslyn is not at all dangerous, I assure you, my dear Breta,” insisted Selma, with a laugh, “and then just think,” continued she in her gracious, confiding way, “how much pleasure it has given me to have you here this afternoon. And I have a great request to make of you: That you should come and stay here with me, right along. Will you?”

De Grey, who had been attentively listening, looked intently at Breta, awaiting her reply.

"It would give me great pleasure, I assure you, Miss de Grey, but I am under engagement to Miss Rutherford for another month."

"But if I should send Miss Rutherford some one to fill your place?"

"Oh! I could not disappoint Miss Rutherford," returned Breta.

"I see I shall have to be content to come for you in your leisure time, for which I shall plead," said Selma, in a winning tone of appeal.

While she was speaking a summons came to dinner, and a more delightful meal was never discussed in any house and by more delightful people than that served in the great dining-room of the haunted house of Elmwood.

After the repast was over, Breta volunteering, she and Selma went up stairs, and, assisted by Judith, Selma's sleeping and dressing-rooms were made bright with curtains, draperies, and all the little elegancies and delicate toys for mantel, toilette, bracket, and stand, that make daintily appointed rooms so charming.

It was nine o'clock when Mr. Whyte drove back to the school with Breta, and on the way he told her how delighted he was that Miss de Grey had come, and what a superior woman he

thought her. "In some respects quite like her brother," said he. "And I consider Joslyn de Grey as grand as Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, or one of Beethoven's symphonies. He is as harmonious as Gluck's *Orpheus*, and the *Orphée* laughs all through it with inspired harmony. He is altogether too fine to be given up to—to ghosts," concluded little Mr. Whyte, with a snap of his whip that startled Flash as though one of the apparitions alluded to had risen up before him.

Breta found Miss Rutherford in the reception-room with some of the older pupils and teachers listening to Miss Bowers, who was then singing Cherubini's *Ave Maria*.

"I must say, Miss Garnet, that Miss Bowers does you great credit. Her voice has been mellowed and improved under your admirable method, until it is a great pleasure to hear her sing. I suppose you have been hard at work trying over those old scores of which your uncle spoke to me."

"We tried over some of them, Miss Rutherford," returned Breta. "The septette in D minor of Johan Nepomuck Hummel's, for one, with its fine third movement—a brilliant *scherzo*.

But we were interrupted," and Breta related the incidents of the afternoon and evening.

Miss Rutherford, saying it was very kind and thoughtful of Miss de Grey in coming to keep house for her brother, astonished Breta by asking, as a favor, would she accompany her to Elmwood immediately after breakfast in the morning.

"It is necessary that due attention should be shown Miss de Grey," said Miss Rutherford. "I can manage your lessons, my dear Miss Garnet. I shall have baskets of fruit and other edibles prepared to take in the carriage with us, as Miss de Grey will find some difficulty in procuring such things until she gets somewhat acquainted with our markets here. Miss de Grey stands high in New York—the whole de Grey family do, in fact. When I found Mr. Joslyn de Grey had purchased your place and was coming among us, I took pains to ascertain who he was, but finding all so unexceptionable, I deem it incumbent upon me to make Miss de Grey feel that she has come among friends. Young Mr. de Grey is, I hear, inclined to be somewhat visionary, but bears a character without a flaw."

How Miss Rutherford obtained all her information about the de Greys she did not tell, but Frank Bowers said in a characteristic aside to Breta, on their way up to the dormitories, that Miss Rutherford had received such a raft of letters that morning, the postman had to employ a little boy to help him carry them.

“And let me tell you, Breta, Miss Rutherford has her own schemes for you. You are the apple of her eye; and she is resolved to make love while the de Greys shine.”

The carriage was at the door promptly after breakfast the next morning; and Miss Rutherford, with a basket of choice strawberries in her hand, made room for Breta beside her,—the coachman having charge of another large basket in which were some of her cook’s famous apple-pies and other dainties.

“Miss de Grey must be some punkins, to make Miss Rutherford spread herself so extensively,” remarked Frank, who was waving her handkerchief to Breta from the veranda, as the carriage drove off. “Miss Rutherford would not have had that lemon *meringue* made and put in the basket for a nobody.”

“You had better turn French cook and done

with it, Frank Bowers," said Pella. "So far as language is concerned you would have nothing to learn. 'Some punkins,' how excessively vulgar!"

"Oh, yes, Pella," retorted Frank, "I should have to learn to say it in French. Punkins, *citrouille*, feminine gender. But, *de la citrouille* would not express the American idiom. And then I should have to wear a long white apron and a paper cap. Thanking you for the suggestion, on the whole I think I'll not turn French cook."

"Pella and Frank, stop your fighting and go to quarrelling, but first listen to some news," said Sadie Burrill, who had just joined the others on the veranda.

"Well?" snapped Pella.

"Only this: Miss Amanda—"

"Miss High-manda, Sadie, Miss High-manda," interrupted Frank, with a mocking grimace.

"Be still, Frank, and let me tell," said Sadie, laughing.

"A young lady of nineteen, and so rude!" sneered Pella.

"Nineteen or ninety, I leave it to every one

if I am not right. Miss High-manda is full as tall as her sister—two regular Lombardy poplars.”

“Do go on, Sadie, and don’t mind Frank and her poplars,” urged Pella. “What did Miss Amanda say?”

“That the picnic is to be put off till this day week,” said the laughing Sadie; “and it is to be a grand affair. Miss de Grey and her brother are invited—”

“Her brother!” ejaculated Pella. “Why, he is a young gentleman. He ’ll be sure to devour some of us. We ’re not even to see a young gentleman, for fear of having our morals corrupted, but are to be kept in hermetically sealed school-rooms, and—”

“Well, Mr. de Grey is an hermetic philosopher; I heard Miss Rutherford say so,” interrupted Frank, with a laugh.

“I am sure, Pella, Miss Rutherford is very much more lenient in that respect than the principals of most boarding-schools,” said Sadie, pleasantly. “She thinks society helps form our manners, you know; and she is constantly inviting young ladies and their brothers and their gentlemen friends, with the heads of their

families, to all our musicales, and our readings, and *conversazioni*—”

“Do let Pella growl, Sadie,” said Frank.

“How long since you have taken up the cudgels of defence in behalf of Miss Rutherford, Sadie Burrill?” demanded Pella, scornfully, ignoring Frank’s remark.

“Do hear Pella talk slang!” exclaimed Frank. “‘Cudgels of defence!’ Quite as horrible as ‘some punkins’! But come, Sadie, never mind the young gentlemen and our morals, what else did Miss Highmanda say?”

“Besides the elite of Lea—the Judge Waltons, the General Leightons, and so on (the de Greys, of course),—your brother, Frank, and yours. Pella—”

“*My* brother,” snapped Pella, “is in Europe.”

“And mine has just returned from Europe,” said Frank. “Tom will come, for I shall write to him myself, and that will bring him. It will be awfully jolly. I shall wear my new navy-blue flannel, with cardinal bows and no jewelry. There is nothing so out of taste as jewelry on a picnic. Mamma says so, and she knows.”

“You are so *very* dark, Frank, that navy-blue and cardinal are the only colors you really

can wear. I shall dress in white, with Marie Louise blue bows, and as much jewelry as I choose,—out of taste indeed! Your mamma, forsooth!—and I shall crimp my hair and wear it down my—”

“Frank looks handsome in any thing, Pella,” interrupted Sadie, “and handsomest of all in white. She will not be compelled to waste time in crimping her hair, as it waves so beautifully naturally.”

“Which, as you well know, Sadie,” returned Pella, triumphantly, “is indicative of a terrible temper.”

“*Le vrai n'est pas toujours vraisemblable,*” mocked Frank, laughing, as with an arm around Sadie's waist she accompanied her to the school-room, the bell for the morning classes loudly ringing.

IX.

MY QUEEN, OR NOT MY QUEEN.

MISS DE GREY and her brother, with little Mr. Whyte, were sitting out on the veranda at Elmwood as the carriage containing Miss Rutherford and Breta drove up. As de Grey looked up his face became suddenly illuminated ; he rose hastily to assist them from the carriage, his eyes, as he went forward, meeting Breta's in a quick telegraphic signal, so inexplicable, so unnoticed by others, and yet so full of import to the owners of the two pairs of eyes thus meeting.

It was Breta, de Grey helped down first, she being nearest, and then Miss Rutherford, who, good lady, saw nothing, having eyes only to the safety of her baskets.

Selma welcomed Breta warmly with a kiss on either cheek, and won Miss Rutherford's favorable opinion by her admirable finish of manner.

They were all seated on the veranda, as being pleasanter than warm June morning than the drawing-room; and Selma was interrupted in something she was saying to Miss Rutherford by two women with scrubbing brushes and pails, who came to ask her questions about their work, and were referred to Judith.

"They are all very willing to come during the daylight it seems," Selma explained, "and my deaf-and-dumb Judith writes her orders to them on the slate. Nothing makes any difference, it appears, with the unseen residents of the house how many visible people are at work in it. I feared at first that the work-people might interfere with brother Joslyn's projects, until Mr. Whyte assured me to the contrary."

"Nothing has ever made any difference," returned Mr. Whyte, with his twisted smile. "They—the unseen residents, as you call them—come and go at their own sweet will—that is, if their will can be said to be sweet. It has been amusing to see those I employed take fright and rush from the house like deer. Once, when two women were at work cleaning, we had a merry time. Said one: 'I can stand it, Lize, as long as you kin. It's only a little talking and noise, and that don't hurt nobody.'

“ ‘It ’s only jest some pesky boys the little gentleman hires to frighten folks. I ain’t afeard.’

“ ‘Jest you stick to that, Lize, like grim death ; noise ain’t nothin.’

“ An Indian war-whoop sounding through the house just then cut off the reply of ‘ Lize,’ and they both rushed down stairs and past me (I was out here noting music), looking like two hunted, wild animals. They came again the next day though, brave as sheep, and hearing nothing, they went home before dark, feeling, as they said, so ‘pop-sure’ that some ‘dratted boys’ were hidden up stairs, that I found myself quite imbued with their idea.”

Miss Rutherford spoke long and learnedly about the just-discovered telephone. As she concluded, de Grey had an admirable opportunity to enlarge upon his own peculiar views, had he chosen to embrace it. But he was so manifestly occupied, eyes, thought, and speech, ostensibly in showing Breta some *curios*,—exquisite Japanese carvings,—that he seemed more inclined to embrace her than the opportunity to explain to Miss Rutherford.

The carvings were a set of boxes within boxes that he had taken from the window-sill,

where other Japanese bric-a-brac were lying partly unpacked, and were so intricate and delicate in workmanship it seemed as though human hands could not have fashioned them.

Talking to Breta in low tones that would not disturb the conversation of the others, his words contained the simple description only of how he came across them when in Yokohama. But as it is how words are uttered that furnishes the subtle indication of the feeling lying back of them, so every word of de Grey's that morning revealed to Breta the interest, the intense interest, he felt in her.

Another of Miss de Grey's women wishing her presence, in her placid, pleasant manner she asked Miss Rutherford if she would not like to see her rooms.

"It is just what I wished to propose," replied Miss Rutherford, "as I have never seen the mysterious interior of Elmwood."

Miss Rutherford admired the spacious, airy apartments with their large oriel windows, and with Miss de Grey as *cicerone* went all through the house; the immense and gorgeously appointed drawing-rooms, library, and dining-rooms especially meeting her approval.

While they were gone, de Grey made the most of his time, continuing his conversation with Breta, little Mr. Whyte occasionally dropping a quaintly pertinent remark. But Mr. Whyte's presence seemed no check to either; on the contrary, innocent and fresh himself, up in all topics of interest, and unobtrusive and assimilative in nature, he gave Breta more confidence; and she sustained her part of the conversation with a brightness and originality that charmed de Grey more and more.

It is quite a matter of wonder how much can be said and lived in a short time. When the ladies returned, it seemed to Breta they had been gone for hours, she felt herself so fully revealed, and so entirely understood, and she admired so greatly the character that had revealed itself to her.

Miss Rutherford introducing the picnic, Selma de Grey took it up warmly, wishing to share the trouble and expense. "Let me see to the ices and fruits. I will send to New York for them," said she. "Where are the grounds?"

"At Rocky Glen, a spot about three miles from the village. We are to be there quite early, at eight o'clock—on the children's ac-

count,—to start at seven from the seminary, and the day is one week from to-day.”

“The railroad passes by it, does it not?” asked de Grey.

“The railroad runs by the spot at a little distance, but does not mar its attractiveness, rocks and dense foliage screening it—it is one of the most secluded places imaginable.”

“I was riding through it this morning,” observed de Grey; “as picturesque a spot as I remember ever to have seen; reminding me of the forest-nooks in Germany.”

Miss Rutherford incited de Grey to giving some descriptions of German scenery; and then, rising to go, her coachman, who had been wandering around the grounds and had just returned, handed down the baskets at her request; she concluding her apology for bringing the trifles, by saying: “I knew, Miss de Grey, you must be in more or less confusion for a day or so.”

“Do not apologize, Miss Rutherford, for so acceptable and opportune a gift,” responded de Grey; “Selma has just been lamenting that she could not provide a better dinner for us than she confesses we are to have to-day.”

"It is so new to me here as yet; and, be as philosophic as gentlemen may, I have never found them objecting to a good dinner," said Selma, with a bright laugh.

As de Grey assisted Miss Rutherford and Breta back into the carriage, Miss Rutherford handed Selma the addresses of the best bakers, butchers, and grocers in Lea, and the carriage drove off; Breta carrying back to the school with her a last look from de Grey's dark eyes that made the little commonplaces of Miss Rutherford difficult to follow, although she related in choice language the traditionary legend connected with Rocky Glen.

From that time de Grey caused it so to chance that he passed some part of each day in Breta's presence. The programme was a drive every afternoon,—his carriage and fine span of horses he having had sent to him from the city, —and inviting his sister to accompany him, and suggesting to her the expediency of calling for Miss Garnet on their way—Selma's sudden fondness for Breta deepening with each sight of her,—all worked harmoniously.

On the afternoon of Thursday Miss Rutherford accompanied them, and on Friday after-

noon the de Greys, having called somewhat earlier, heard the conclusion of Frank's singing lesson; the other pianos of the school being occupied with practising pupils, Breta was hearing her in the parlor.

Selma, much struck with Frank's voice and method, spoke of it when she had concluded her lesson; she had been singing quite effectively, Mozart's *Agnus Dei* in Mass C.

"Due entirely to Miss Garnet, I assure you, Miss de Grey, for I sang like a hoot-owl four years ago. She,—Miss Garnet,—had a time of it in making me understand the difference between pure tones and guttural tones, for I sang all in my throat. I scarcely knew I had a larynx, let alone that I must not permit the air column from the lungs to remain in the larynx, forcing those hideous, howling tones that are so excruciatingly horrid. I had an awful time in learning how to take my tones above, instead of below the glottis, with the glottis-stroke. And as for my tongue,—all I knew was how to gabble with it; and to learn that it must lie easily and naturally on the floor of my mouth, with the tip just touching my front teeth (and not to curl up into a spoon, as I made it), was preposterous to

me then. You see, Miss de Grey, I was never one of those fortunate ones who groove into the right way by instinct; the wrong way is so much easier and pleasanter, at least for one's self. Other people's ears used to be fearfully scorched by my singing, I being the only one who thoroughly enjoyed it."

Miss Bowers said this in her off-hand way, leaving Selma, as she left every one, in doubt if she were fully in earnest, but never in doubt whether or not to laugh—for the laugh she evoked when she so wished was always inevitable.

"Then I am to infer you regret your present finished style of singing?" asked Selma.

"Miss de Grey, I never nursed a dear gazelle, but I nursed a dear monkey once, that papa brought me from Brazil. That monkey was like my voice at that time, making no one 'glad' but myself. Now that with infinite nursing I have acquired a decent method, why, of course, I value it. But it was the labor, you see,—I detesting work."

"Miss Bowers, I wish you would accompany us in our drive this afternoon, and we will discuss the labor question," proposed Selma, smiling.

Frank declined the invitation, thanking Selma in so lady-like a way as showed she could be exceedingly well bred on occasion.

"I see, Miss Garnet," said de Grey, who had been turning over music, "you go to the fountain source. Do you bring up all your pupils on Mozart, Cherubini, Rossini, Gluck, Handel, and the great masters I find here?"

"Always when I can, and when I cannot I descend to lesser masters," said Breta, with a laugh, adding: "But if you have an idea of entering as a pupil, Mr. de Grey, I will promise not to teach *you* any thing but the most severely classical—"

"You will do well to avail yourself of Miss Garnet's instruction," said Frank in a meaning way that caused a laugh.

"If I thought Miss Rutherford would take me," hesitated de Grey. "But I am afraid I should be like the rest, Miss Garnet, and stipulate for an occasional 'tune,' Blumenthal's 'My Queen' for one."

"I doubt if Breta would give it to you, Mr. de Grey; she has a way of having her own will, and so easily that you knock under,—that is, I mean, of course (and Frank laughed at her own

expense), you are converted to her views before you know it. I used to rebel against those poky old masses of the old masters, until at last I fairly learned to love them. I was a *very* troublesome pupil, and Breta being no older than myself—but a century in advance of me in acquirement—had, as I said, a time of it in forming my taste. I hope you won't be so rebellious a pupil."

"I was always noted for docility, was I not, Selma?" said de Grey.

"Always, Joslyn; docilly determined to carry your point, and in such a thoroughly docile way I always found you always gained it," replied Selma, with a loving smile.

"So I should judge," added Breta, with a quick, responsive laugh. "Mr. de Grey seems to me one more than usually firm of purpose, one who would literally go through fire for a sufficient object, and—"

"And—pray proceed, Miss Garnet," urged de Grey, smiling down with a steady look into Breta's eyes; the very steadiness of his look and the position of his head, that brought out the firm lines of his mouth and chin, proving the correctness of the assertion.

But Breta ventured no more, and Frank exclaimed :

“ That being conceded, Mr. de Grey, it will be ‘ My Queen ’ or not ‘ My Queen ’ ; and who yields the point time will show.”

“ Pardon my curiosity, Miss Bowers,” said de Grey in his quietest manner, ignoring the point Frank had just made with so much apparent innocence. “ But on the stairs, as we came in, we encountered a young lady with a Greek face, and a profusion of golden-red hair. In features, like the picture on exhibition, of Garafelia Mohalbi, who, it is said, was bought out of Turkish persecution and adopted as his own daughter by a Boston gentleman, some years ago.”

“ Her name is Pella Morton ; she is considered remarkably handsome,” replied Frank.

“ So I should suppose,” assented de Grey. But although his words assented, his tone implied a mental reservation that did not escape the observation of either Frank or Breta.

“ Joslyn,” said Selma, tapping her brother’s arm lightly with her fan, “ we might chat here all the afternoon, and be delightfully entertained. Do join with me in prevailing on Miss

Bowers to accompany us, that we may continue our pleasant talk in the carriage."

"It has been hinted that I get my own way, Miss Bowers," urged de Grey, turning from Breta toward Frank. "Now my will is that you accept Selma's invitation, and if Miss Garnet, who always has her own will, would kindly join me in urging, you certainly must comply."

Selma, who, in her gentle, easy way, having risen to go, and was standing beside Breta, and petting her pretty brown hair with her fair, soft hand, looked with a pleasant smile from one to another.

"You make me ashamed of my refusal," relented Frank.

"I knew you could not find it in your heart to persevere in it," declared Breta.

"It will be delightful, and I shall be delighted with the drive of course, and—. But," faltered Frank, "I did not like to feel I owed my invitation just to the chance of Miss de Grey's happening on me in the parlor. I will ask Miss Rutherford's permission."

The permission gained, Frank appeared with Breta, both hatted and gloved.

The drive proved a pleasant one, and as they

were returning, a horseman, overtaking the carriage and recognizing its inmates, wheeled his horse around and discovered to them the handsome features of Noel Dunraven.

The whole manœuvre could not have been surpassed in elegance, and Dunraven never showed to better advantage. He was dressed in full riding costume, his abundant waving blonde hair mingling artistically with his blonde beard. And, mounted on a fine spirited horse of the largest size and most perfect proportions, he himself of the largest size and most perfect proportions, horse and man looked as though made expressly each for the other. He rode, not in the modern English style of rising in the stirrups, but in the old Grecian method of horsemanship, having achieved by much practice that method as most in accordance with his conception of the needs of the Renaissance. Like the old Grecian warriors, who might have been Centaurs, so a part of their horses did they seem, he rode as though all his life he might have dined, supped, breakfasted, and slept in his saddle.

"An uncommonly fine rider," commented Selma, as Dunraven, with a sweeping bow, hat in hand, passed on. "Brother Joslyn and Ben-

jamin—Mr. Black—I have always been proud of as good horsemen, but this gentleman's riding can only be called the perfection of equestrian grace. Pray who is he?"

"He is my cousin, Noel Dunraven," replied Breta, quietly. But though she spoke with so little emotion, a shadow had crossed the brightness of her face and left her eyes with a troubled look in them.

De Grey lapsed into almost utter silence, making only an occasional abstracted remark; the absorbed expression of his face, paler than its wont, deepening as they proceeded. The conversation was carried on quite briskly by Selma and Frank; de Grey's reticence and Breta's far-off look and manner passing unnoticed.

On arriving at the seminary, they found Noel Dunraven sitting on the veranda in conversation with Miss Rutherford. He came forward with the proportions of Hercules and the grace of the *Jeune* Apollo toward the carriage,—de Grey having just assisted the ladies to alight,—and walked up the veranda steps by the side of Breta, leaving de Grey to follow with Frank.

Miss de Grey, who had preceded the others,

was asking of Miss Rutherford the pleasure of Breta's company, with that of Frank, for the day on the morrow, it being Saturday, the usual school holiday.

"It is very kind of you, Miss de Grey," replied Miss Rutherford, suavely. "I am delighted that the young ladies should have so pleasant a change from the monotony of school life."

Being introduced to Dunraven by Breta, Miss de Grey, always bent on making every one happy, included him also in her invitation.

"You do not come any more to Elmwood, Mr. Dunraven; I find your uncle misses you. Pray do not let my being there frighten you off; I am not at all a formidable person, I assure you. Shall we not expect you to-morrow?"

With a gratefully graceful acknowledgment of Miss de Grey's kindness, Dunraven, regretting a prior engagement in New York for the morning, expressed himself as being only too happy to avail himself of her invitation, and would certainly be at Elmwood late in the afternoon.

The trouble had not left Breta's eyes. She was standing beside de Grey, and they were

interchanging a few commonplace remarks, when, on a motion to go, from his sister, his eyes meeting those of Breta, a whole volume of unspoken words were uttered by both in one of those sudden mutual glances that come into eyes perhaps once in a lifetime.

And de Grey conducted his sister to the carriage, she telling Miss Rutherford that she should send for the young ladies quite early in the morning.

As they drove off, Dunraven, in an exquisitely picturesque attitude, was bending his tall form over Breta, saying something in which he was apparently much interested.

"It would really be worth while," observed Selma to her brother, "to make a study of this new æsthetic cult—new and old, that is—if one could realize the ideal in—in external grace, the perfect rhythm of movement that Mr. Dunraven has achieved. His dress and manners are a living protest against the incongruousness, the almost total lack of this age in good taste, in favor of the lost beautiful of the old Renaissance."

"Yes, without doubt," acquiesced de Grey, absently. Recalling his wandering thoughts

from Breta's last look, so significant, to a sense of his sister's remark, he qualified his assent: "That is, if the—external grace, the—rhythm of movement, and that," said he, with a touch of burlesque in his tone, "be not in excess of the lost beautiful so cherished by the masters of those mediæval and old Greek times; which, by the way, always found its choicest expression in the simply natural."

"Oh, it is the simply natural you wish," returned Selma, laughing. "You have only to go to our farm-houses, where people (of sterling worth certainly) cultivate corn rather than classical costumes, and potatoes rather than poetic postures. Still, although there can be no genuine expression of beauty that does not emanate from faith in nature and earnest seeking after the real, the true, yet the very effort to train the imagination in the outward requirements of this ideal, must raise the standard of moral excellence."

"You always were wonderfully logical, Selma. But I suppose now, although your dress and manners are simply perfect, a model for the rising generation of young ladies, we may expect to see you in Boticellian costume and

stained-glass attitudes, with a choice bouquet of sun-flowers on your breast, and—”

“Certainly,” interrupted Selma, laughing, “I always was an extremist, you know. But you must admit that Mr. Dunraven has nothing about him of the extreme of that fashionable ultra-æstheticism. He does not belong to the sun-flower school ; he ’s neither Boticellian in dress nor stained glass in attitude.”

“I admit,” conceded de Grey, looking down into his sister’s face with a peculiar smile, “Mr. Dunraven is all you say. He is highly cultured, remarkably handsome and well dressed—perhaps a little too well dressed. He should receive the title of Admirable the second, successor to Crichton.”

“How unlike you, Joslyn,—you always so free from unreasonable prejudices. You have taken a most unaccountable dislike to poor Mr. Dunraven. I cannot understand it,” said Selma, with much simplicity, regarding her brother wonderingly.

De Grey paid great attention to the paces of the high-stepping horses he was driving for a moment, bearing the scrutiny of his sister’s eyes without change of muscle.

"I shall look well into this, Selma," said he, seriously. "An unreasonable prejudice is the poorest investment in the world."

"He being Mr. Whyte's nephew too, you know," deprecatingly continued she. "We shall see a great deal of him of course. He comes to-morrow, in the latter part of the day. It will be so pleasant for Breta to meet him at the old place. You know they are not really cousins, although they were almost brought up together, Mr. Whyte thinking so much of his wife's sister's son."

"I see," said de Grey, assenting to his sister's plans for making it pleasant for her guests, and listening to her responsively as she still continued the fruitful theme—possibly as a self-imposed penance for his "unreasonable prejudices."

X.

A STRATEGIC ARRANGEMENT.

DURING the day at Elmwood, Frank, developing remarkable strategic powers, contrived to leave Breta and de Grey alone together several times, manœuvring with such tact that not even Breta suspected her design. In this Frank took the heroic pride of a martyr, immolating on the shrine of friendship that which her self-seeking instincts would have prompted, and without the satisfaction of receiving any credit for her sacrifice.

They had all taken a long drive in the morning, exploring new and wild regions, little Mr. Whyte accompanying them ; and after returning, Frank, becoming suddenly interested in some music scores, induced Selma, ever ready for Mr. Whyte's violin, to go with her to Mr. Whyte's study and hear him play them. And for her reward they were executed so charm-

ingly that she was intensely interested in spite of herself.

The melodious strains floated in through the windows of the drawing-room where Breta and de Grey were sitting, and though conversing delightfully, never once touching on the subject Frank had selected in her own mind for them.

It was in the afternoon, after lunch, that, taking a stroll around the tangled grounds, Selma was expatiating with great enthusiasm on the plan she and Joslyn had of restoring the old place to its pristine order, and having arrived at the knoll under the great elms, they seated themselves on the old carved seats, where the cool breezes were forever playing.

The vast extent of the prospect before them, bounded by the purple mists and the blue shadowy mountain range; the varied beauty of the seventy odd miles of valley below them, with its picturesque villages, streams, and forests, gave them something always to study. And conversation flagging, Breta, her large, clear eyes shining like stars, seemed to lose herself in contemplation of the view. Selma looked admiringly upon her, and as she chanced to glance from her to Joslyn, she saw in his

eyes, which were attentively regarding Breta, a certain inscrutable something that suddenly caused a light to break in on her comprehension. She seemed a little bewildered by it at first, and then evidently recalling many unheeded little points of the past few days, her face settled into a well-satisfied expression.

Frank had watchfully noted and understood Selma's chain of thought, and a few moments after, when Judith, Selma's deaf-and-dumb maid, appeared, intimating that Miss de Grey was needed at the house, she rose to go also.

"I am dying for the second volume of this," exclaimed Frank, giving the book she held in her hand, with a slender forefinger shut in as a mark, a graceful little outward sway. "I have galloped through this first volume between whiles, and I *must* see how the hero and heroine get out of their troubles, and who gets who in the end." And Frank drew Selma's arm within her own, and sauntered off with her toward the house.

Breta was silent for a time, apparently still studying the broad landscape. De Grey was silent also, sufficiently well content to study her, the repose of her exquisitely moulded

features evidently possessing a rare charm for him.

"This view has a wonderful attraction for me ; it always brings up a crowd of half-forgotten recollections and suggestions of future possibilities," observed Breta, quietly, looking up at de Grey.

"Such as"—prompted he.

"Oh ! I doubt if I could find words to make them intelligible. It is so easy to think—dream I mean—and so difficult to put vague dreams into a presentable shape in words."

"Then you should sing them, Miss Garnet. There is a world you say when you sing. I thought, on that first Sunday I heard you, that I had never before understood those inspired words. To be able to express the full import of beautiful words, in tones so cultured that the labor of the culture is lost in the spontaneity of utterance, is the perfection of art, allied to the divine gift of nature."

"You at least, Mr. de Grey, are at no loss, I see, for words with which to express your thoughts," said Breta, with a light laugh.

"I accept only the flattering letter of your unrhymed epigram, Miss Garnet ; I reject utter-

ly its satirical spirit," responded de Grey, laughing with a keen relish of her pointed speech and its accompanying smile. "But really, I have been for the past five or six years so devoted to scientific study that the thoughts and dreams of young ladies have formed but a small part of my life. I confess to some curiosity on the point."

"As a matter of scientific study?" asked Breta, with a bright, upward look. "But it would scarcely pay you for the labor, Mr. de Grey. You had better trust to the physiological and ethical writers. They will tell you with one accord that the feminine brain is incapable of any purely logical train of thought; that we jump at our conclusions. In short, that we are very shoal and frivolous, and that it is to the massive, powerful, masculine brain the world owes all its wise deductions and—and every thing useful or great."

"I am at your mercy, Miss Garnet," returned de Grey, laughing. "I have nothing to say in defence of the physiologists. I am not certain though but that jumping at a conclusion is the wisest way of arriving at it. Socrates infers it when he tells us that intuition is but a rapid process of reasoning by analogy."

"Oh, that was centuries ago. Modern ethics are far in advance of Socrates. The modern writers, in giving us intuition as an especially feminine trait, infer, of course, that it is quite a puerile attribute, far beneath the dignity of the masculine brain."

"Then you think, Miss Garnet, that the modern ethicists wade sometimes beyond their depth? The Rosy-cross-men, you know, held intuition and inspiration as one."

"I—I scarcely know what I really do think," faltered Breta, with a half laugh. Brought suddenly face to face with her own drolling, she began to have grave misgivings that she might be making a goose of herself before such a young wiseacre as her uncle had represented de Grey to be. "Please understand, Mr. de Grey, if I advance opinions, it is, of course, in a perfectly reckless, illogical way. I have thought out so little," she added.

"You advance opinions in a perfectly—in a way that interests me beyond measure," said de Grey, looking down into her eyes with a warm light in his. "And I should say you had done some pretty hard thinking to master the crabbed points of music, just as you have."

“A little hard study was all that was necessary to achieve that. Those who made the music did the hard thinking,” asserted Breta, lightly, steadying herself under his look.

“To interpret the great masters understandingly is to be one with them,” affirmed de Grey.

“It would be pleasant to think so; but brought up as I was in a land of music and art-treasure, where one is reminded on all sides of the great things superior intelligences can achieve, one is apt, I suppose, to think slightly of one’s own small powers.” This was said with so much simplicity that de Grey, studying Breta’s face for a moment, replied quite indirectly :

“To the great masters who devoted their lives to the development of art the world owes its best lessons. Those men of the Renaissance—those world-renowned painters,—with their rare ability, would have been great scientists, statesmen, or musicians under other conditions. Their influence will be felt to the end of time.”

“Ah, you see, Mr. de Grey, they had the originality to comprehend that nature is the best model, and the courage to forsake the servile copying of foregone methods, and the

genius to execute new conceptions," said Breta, warmly.

"Yes, all those were needed. The persistent departure from worn-out methods into a bold conception of the truth found in nature is what produces the new birth in art, or music, or letters, or in religion. It was Luther's originality and genius and courage that created the German Reformation, which is called, you know, the Renaissance of Christianity,—the word Renaissance being interpreted as 'the consciousness of intellectual liberty.'"

"Yes, I see," returned Breta, deeply interested. "And the intellectual liberty of Italy—and through Italy that of other nations—commenced with the Renaissance, the *Rinascenza*, literally the New Birth."

"Commenced," added de Grey, smiling at her quiet enthusiasm, "when, in the thirteenth century, the sculptor Niccola Pisano, and close upon him the painter Giotto, and following them Michael Angelo, da Vinci, Titian, Raphael, Correggio, and the whole army of great painters and sculptors, turned their backs on the models of the schools to work out their ideas with all nature before them. After Cor-

reggio, artists began again copying from school models—it was now their beloved *Raffaele* they copied—and art declined. Then came the political troubles of the seventeenth century, and art in Italy was threatened with extinction. But pardon me, Miss Garnet, I am growing extensively statistic, to say nothing of didactic,” concluded de Grey, with a laugh at himself.

“Then there was the French Renaissance, Mr. de Grey, of which I know positively nothing,” suggested Breta, with a tentative upward glance and smile.

“And the English Renaissance, Miss Garnet, started by Turner and followed up by the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood.”

“I have the profoundest admiration,” returned Breta, “for those pre-Raphaelite painters, who have so bravely withstood the howls of the Royal Academy and the press, and have proved by their works that nature to study from is better than the models of the schools. Those of the old Renaissance had the encouragement of appreciation and sympathy, while these of the new Renaissance—these leaders of a forlorn hope—have worked on, achieving success, with the discouragement of abuse from all sides.”

De Grey watched the delicate changes of Breta's face, that expressed so much more of generous enthusiasm than even her words.

"They have been and are so ably defended by John Ruskin, a host in himself," said he, "that they need no other support. But men so much in earnest as they would work on the same without defence."

"And the new social Renaissance of æsthetic London, Mr. de Grey, that has so curiously grown out of the other. My cousin, Noel Dunraven, has labored diligently to make me see it as he sees it. But he failed utterly, for I could make nothing of it; at least, that was pleasant."

Breta said this in her quietest way, not as imparting a confidence, but as simply narrating a fact, with the charming candor that formed so large a part of her character.

De Grey's spirits rose perceptibly.

"Mr. Dunraven has painted some fine pictures, Mr. Whyte tells me," said he.

"Very fine, and he has written some, mostly verse, and has composed music. (De Grey listened attentively.) No one can find fault with his perspectives, or lights and shades," continued Breta, "or his dactyls or iambics, or detect

prohibited fifths, faulty progressions, or other irregularities in his nocturnes or idyls. Whatever he does, he does well."

De Grey, feeling the Dunraven ground to be a somewhat dangerous one, but wishing to hear Breta still further express herself, said :

"My sister admires Mr. Dunraven greatly, and even thinks of working out the æsthetic problem for her own improvement."

Breta opened her eyes a little wonderingly as she looked up and met de Grey's incomprehensible glance.

"We—my Uncle Ray and I,—" said she, "spent several weeks in London just before we came to America, after leaving Milan. We were with my aunt, who is the very head and front of the æsthetic offending. Noel Dunraven also was there, and my aunt (she is not his aunt, being my father's sister) depends upon him, when she is fortunate enough to get him in London, to assist her at her *conversazioni* and other æsthetic gatherings. Her house is large, and the drawing-rooms, connecting, are so arranged as to doors and furniture, to give an idea of space and repose. There are numerous curiously contrived vistas, quite labyrin-

thine in effect, terminating in gorgeous displays of flowers or plants, or in cunningly hung pictures, by famous artists, with the light falling on each from unexpected windows at just the right angle. It is all very beautiful and very wonderful. Her collection of faïence and majolica (the majolica of undoubted Majorca origin) is of the finest—as are all of her art decorations. And her collection of friends is not to be rivalled. One meets all the celebrities, all the great personages of the day at her entertainments. And the gowns of the most ardent of the æsthetes are truly astonishing. The operatic stage fades into insignificance before their artistically tinted costumes of every century. They (the æsthetes) have attitudes and ohs! and ahs! for great singers or fine piano recitals, every shade of ‘soul’ and ‘intensity’ being expressed; and they expire with delight, or revive with despair. They made of me—” Here Breta came to a sudden pause.

“Pray, Miss Garnet, don’t leave the part of Hamlet out,” urged de Grey, laughing as he looked intently at Breta.

“Well, I was the last new craze. You see I had just been singing at Milan, and they set to

work calling me names," and Breta lifted her eyes to his with a brilliant look.

"Calling you names?" repeated de Grey.

"They called me Raphaelesque, Titianesque, a Correggio, a Millais, Bordone-esque, and the *esque* of nearly every known painter. If I had been Proteus himself I could not have had more, or more dissimilar, *esques*," said Breta, with a short laugh.

"In brief, you were the one utterly-utter, pulsating soul that pleased to pain." De Grey, spoke in a tone of burlesque, while suddenly across his eyes flickered a comprehensive gleam, as though at that instant he had made the discovery of a long-sought-for point.

"There was a very lov—there was a face on exhibition a few weeks ago, a head, in the gallery of the New York Decorative Society," continued he, carefully choosing his words. "It was there, and then was gone. I missed it severely. It was not for sale, and I was told, on enquiring, that the original of the face had censured the artist (names of both original and artist not revealed) for exhibiting the painting without her permission,—and consequently its removal. The artist, if I mistake not, was Mr. Dunraven."

"Yes, it was he. And we—he and I—came very near a final disagreement about it," replied Breta, quietly, but she said no more.

"There are some fine things being done at present in the Decorative Art Society and elsewhere in decorative art, and more that are trivial and meaningless," said de Grey. "But the poorest is better, much better than nothing being done. Is not that your opinion also, Miss Garnet?"

"Don't you understand why the decorative art of this day is so trivial, so inferior to what it was in the old faïence and majolica times? It is all owing to the fact that so many women are entering the art-field," suggested Breta, with a laugh.

"And women sing, Miss Garnet. And such a gift as yours—to return to my first proposition—is one of the grandest inspirations of which the world can boast."

"And I am never really and entirely contented except when I am singing. And I—I often ask myself if I did right in resigning a profession where, had there been nothing vexing, I should have been supremely happy."

"Knowing your success, and your capacity

for succeeding, Miss Garnet, I have wondered why you gave it up."

"The management and the *maestri* urged me to continue ; every one urged me to continue ; but they all—the public, I mean—made such a fuss over me (that is, my voice), and it all (the fuss, I mean) seemed so noisy and jarred so on me that—well I was sixteen then, and it was three years ago and over ; perhaps I might have more nerve now to withstand the—the disagreeable part of it."

"They—disagreeable things—are what all successful artists are compelled to undergo, especially one so—" de Grey came to a sudden pause. "Your uncle told me," resumed he, "of your reasons for quitting the brilliant career before you ; but it occurred to me, though perhaps I have no right to judge, that with a little more—as you say—nerve, you might have lived down the disagreeable side of the life, for the sake of the great benefit you could confer on the world. For such voices as yours, Miss Garnet, can teach the world, and the world needs teaching."

"There is where it is, Mr. de Grey," replied Breta, seriously. "I have, of late, felt my lack

of aim in life. Admitting that nothing can harmonize and humanize human beings more than music, all who can raise the standard of music by giving to the world the best, ought to sacrifice every thing for that. I am satisfied I did wrong in refusing to lend my mite toward helping on the improvement of the race. If I could not give the *very* best I could have given *my* best." And Breta gave a little laugh and a little upward glance half mocking, half serious.

"And you may yet repair your error, Miss Garnet, and make the world hap—and use your gift for the benefit of mankind?"

"Possibly, yes."

"And your uncle?"

"Highly approves."

For a few moments nothing was said, but meeting Breta's eyes that were filled with a tender content, and thinking he had never seen her look so charming, de Grey remarked :

"I, too, have my aims in life, Miss Garnet ; some that would be called visionary, but others—good, practical ones—that I shall undoubtedly carry out. It would give me much pleasure to explain them to you some day."

The "some day," but more the look accom-

panying it, aroused Breta forcibly from the vague and pleasant wandering into which she had fallen to the full significance of the more days like the present. Trusting herself only to say how much pleasure it would give her to listen to his plans, she hurried into a description of portions of her home life at Milan, portraying Madama the Contessa, and signor the professore, her old *maestro*, and introduced so many characteristic biographical anecdotes, that de Grey declared he felt well acquainted with both, and was saying he was sure he could pick out the professor among a thousand, as Frank, with Selma and Mr. Whyte, came up.

"I would not let your uncle bury himself any longer this lovely afternoon, so I dragged him out of his den to come and help entertain us. Did I not do right, Breta?"

"Do you not always do right, Miss Bowers?" asked de Grey.

"Certainly, always. It is so easy to do right, you know. But I wish to tell you the programme for this evening," continued Frank, so breezily it was as though a strong west wind had arisen. "Breta is to sing, I am to sing, you, Mr. de Grey, are to play on your de-

lightful cello, with Mr. Whyte's Crémone, and Miss de Grey to accompany on the piano. It—the piano—is just unboxed and set up, and is *such* an exquisitely toned instrument! I have been making Miss de Grey play for me."

"It was the arrival of the piano, then, that called you off to the house, was it, Selma?" asked de Grey.

"I have finished that arrangement, de Grey," observed Mr. Whyte.

"So remiss in me not to give you the credit, Mr. Whyte, of the arrangement," exclaimed Frank, with one of her mischievous looks.

His eyes taking in the mischievous look, Mr. Whyte, with his twisted smile, said :

"I was alluding, Miss Frank, to my score of Bach's fugue in C sharp."

"Score one against me, Mr. Whyte. I take it all Bach. We'll have my arrangement carried out to the letter, and yours to the note—seven sharps, and all."

"You are too many sharps for me, Miss Frank," returned quiet little Mr. Whyte, with another twisted smile.

At dinner, Selma had for additional guests Dunraven and Counsellor Black, and the even-

ing was devoted, as Frank had intimated, to music; Dunraven, in his light, taking-it-for-granted way, playing all Breta's accompaniments, and playing them exquisitely, as Breta had said he did every thing.

He quite overpowered even unemotional Mr. Black, with the superbness of his attitudes. And de Grey, when he drove Breta and Frank back to the seminary, was so silent and Breta was so silent, that Frank had to do all the talking.

XI.

A GREAT ADMIRATION FOR SOLDIERS.

AS every day merges into the next, so the next day came,—a warm, sunny, bell-ringing Sunday. People go to church for various causes. Some to show new hats and dresses, some because somebody will say something if they don't go to church, some to criticise, some to set a good example, and some few, rare individuals, to worship.

Joslyn de Grey went to worship ; but it was at the shrine of a beautiful graven idol he knelt. And he carried back with him for home worship (a generous harvest he had garnered and miserly hoarded) the noble strains of a voice of purest melody, the sweet outlines of a lovely face replete with character and feeling, and certain stray glances from charming eyes that had bewitched him hopelessly.

It was on Tuesday morning, the day before

the picnic, that de Grey found himself face to face again with Breta, upon riding over to the seminary and valiantly standing the cross-fire from countless dazzling eyes, as he passed the young ladies engaged at tennis on the lawn; Selim indulging himself in the many remarkable equine evolutions spirited horses take it in their heads to perform at times.

Breta, with Frank beside her, an arm thrown lovingly over Breta's shoulder, was sitting on the veranda in Miss Rutherford's favorite nook when off duty, and was reading aloud to that lady from a late French journal. Sadie Burrill and Pella Morton also were listening to the reading—it being the hour before lesson time—Sadie looking as she always did, like a peach or a garden rose-bud, and Pella in the attitude in which Garafelia Mohalbi's portrait was taken. Frank had told her that de Grey thought her like the picture, and at considerable pains and expense she had procured a copy of it; and she herself was sure she needed only the Greek costume to make the similitude perfect.

After the introduction was over to the young ladies with whom he was unacquainted, de

Grey, apologizing, said he was afraid he had interrupted some important lesson.

"No lesson at all, I assure you," blandly replied Miss Rutherford. "I do not understand French or Italian very well, Mr. de Grey, and Miss Garnet, frequently in our leisure hours, kindly translates for me the foreign news, keeping me posted in the scientific and musical information I should otherwise lose."

"And so do not get rusty in the languages of the countries where I spent so many years of my life," returned Breta, with a graceful turn of her head toward de Grey, and a pretty ignoring of conferring a favor that was delightful.

"I often have occasion to tell Miss Garnet that she is more than half Italian," said Miss Rutherford, with dignified suavity.

"My sympathies certainly were always, and my strongest affection still is, with Italy ; but I am an American, and shall never give up my birthright," Breta replied quietly, with a charmingly ingenuous smile. But there was something in the very quiet tone of her voice, and the concentrated look in her large eyes, that seemed a defiant little protest for the great

love she confessed to having for a country not her own.

At least de Grey so interpreted her.

"No one could live the early years of one's life in such a country as Italy, of all countries, so full of traditions and memories that appeal to the strongest feelings, without becoming in heart an Italian," said he.

"Oh, Mr. de Grey!" piped up Pella Morton in silvery tones, "no one could hear Miss Garnet relate some of the scenes she has actually witnessed at the time Garibaldi was fighting so desperately, and the Austrian police had it all their own way, without cold shivers; and then when the Prussian victory over Austria came in so nicely to help Italy to Venice and the Quadrilateral and all that for which Italy was fighting so hard; and then when the French Empire was overthrown, and Victor Emanuel marched triumphantly into Rome; I assure you, Mr. de Grey, it would all fairly make your hair stand on end."

"I assure you, Miss Morton, my mental hair has stood on end many times in reading of the desperate (desperate is just the word, Miss Morton) struggles of Italy against such odds,"

returned de Grey, with a very ambiguous smile. "When I was a boy I wanted to enlist under Garibaldi, and parental authority found it difficult to restrain my ardor."

"I was not over nine years old," said Breta, laughing, "when I accompanied Uncle Ray, who was as staunch a patriot as the staunchest, to Garibaldi's camp. It was a curious place for a little girl to be in; but it was my ardent desire, and Uncle Ray never denied me any thing. We went from Milan to Genoa, and then from Genoa to Palermo in a vessel. Garibaldi was stationed on a little plateau, which had a wide outlook, up in those grim Sicilian mountain ranges; his scarlet soldiers (some one has called his red soldiery 'a fiery sword of retribution') having stuck lances in the ground and stretched blankets across them, for Garibaldi allowed nothing so effeminate as tents. The whole scene was a never-to-be-forgotten one in its wild picturesqueness. There were several Americans present, and two or three British naval officers. Uncle Ray having effected the object of his visit, which was a personal interview with the great general, and to present him with quite a large sum of money, we left."

"It must have been bea-e-u-u-tiful!" exclaimed Pella. "But I should have been terribly frightened."

"It was a great event for me," continued Breta. "Garibaldi shook hands with me when we went; and I told him I hated the Austrians (my hatred for the Austrians in those days was perfectly fierce), and I told him with a great deal of fervor that I *knew* he would be even with them yet. Garibaldi laughed heartily at my words, and those near him roared with laughter. And then they all (the red soldiery, I mean, not Garibaldi) set up an 'evvivaing' that terrified me some; but my small soul was so consumed by the fires of patriotism, that I stood it all without flinching."

"Such an honor, Mr. de Grey, to have shaken hands and conversed with Garibaldi!" said Pella, at the conclusion of the laugh Breta had elicited.

"In those years my love for Victor Emmanuel," continued Breta, "was beyond any thing I can express. And when the victory of Sedan overthrew the French power, the entry of Victor Emmanuel in Rome was quite as enthusiastic a triumph to me as it could have been to him.

I was about fourteen at that time. And for Verdi—who worked so hard for Italy, in many ways—my love was an overwhelming enthusiasm. Verdi's name, in fact, was a talisman throughout Italy. And 'Viva V-e-r-d-i' was well understood in every opera-house and every gathering to mean not only 'Viva Verdi,' but '*Viva Vittorio Emmanuele Re d' Italia*' as well. And the watchful Austrian police, who had caused Verdi's operas to be so remorselessly cut down, in rooting out patriotic expressions (though they never got them all out) could find nothing in 'Viva Verdi' that must be suppressed, although it was a watchword so well known to Italian patriots."

"That is something you never told us before, Miss Garnet," said Pella, bending forward from her Garafelia attitude which she had again assumed. "It is quite an historical item. Singular that the letters of Verdi's name should be so significant,—and Verdi such a *maestro* too."

"Do hear Pella gush," said Frank, in a tone inaudible to all but her friend Sadie Burrill, over toward whom she had leaned.

"Don't you admire Verdi excessively, Mr. de Grey?" asked Pella. "He makes you fairly in

love with consecutive octaves, he manages them so cleverly—just as Chopin does his consecutive fifths. It is so perfectly lovely to be able to transcend rules and make something superior—that cannot be found fault with. It is the acme of genius.” And Pella fell back into her Garafelia attitude.

“For my part,” broke in Frank, with an expressive little grimace over at Breta, “I must confess Pella has the advantage of me, if she can even tell a consecutive fifth. I never could, notwithstanding the howl Harmonists make over them. But I agree with her in one thing, that it is perfectly lovely to break rules on occasion.”

Even Miss Rutherford was compelled to join in the laugh this created, and Pella, trying hard to look amiable, laughed more than any one else.

De Grey, saved the necessity of replying to Pella’s somewhat puzzling remark, turned to Miss Rutherford.

“I come freighted with a message from my sister,” said he. “Mr. Black, Col. Conynghame, and Count Gueret have unexpectedly arrived at Elmwood, and Selma begs the privilege of

bringing them with her to the picnic to-morrow."

"Miss de Grey's friends are more than welcome. Pray tell your sister I consider she has the ordering of who shall be invited quite as much as I. Still, of course, it being a school picnic it is very kind and thoughtful in her to defer to me. The Count Gueret of whom you speak is the writer, is he not, of that article on French politics just out in the *Age*?"

"The same. He is quite a savant, as well as revolutionist, and is of the old French stock."

"And the Col. Conynghame you mention distinguished himself, if I remember aright, in our late civil war?"

"You remember aright, Miss Rutherford," replied de Grey, with a smile. "Ralph—Col. Conynghame—caught the patriotic fever (from which I suffered also, being then fifteen) and enlisted when he was only seventeen years old. At eighteen, for having captured a Southern flag under marked circumstances, he was made lieutenant of a company that his father raised and fitted out. And upon the close of the war he was colonel of a regiment; and although he

had been serving in all less than three years he achieved considerable military renown."

"He must still be very young?" said Miss Rutherford questioningly.

"He is twenty-eight, two years older than I. Ralph and I (did I say he is my cousin?) have been abroad mostly since the close of the war."

"It must be a glorious thing to feel one has fought and bled in defence of one's country," remarked Pella.

"And a still more glorious thing to be able to say: 'I fought, bled, and *died* for my country,'" put in Frank, with melodramatic fervor and an aside grimace at Pella.

"You must excuse Frank," said Pella, sweetly. "She is always privileged to—pardon me if I use one of her own graphic expressions—to 'go you one better.'"

"Was Col. Conynghame ever gloriously wounded, Mr. de Grey?" asked Frank, laughing.

"Never seriously," replied de Grey, evidently enjoying the *hors d'œuvre* of Pella and Frank, though too polite to show it. "He served under Grant, but like many others who

escaped unscathed, he seemed possessed of the secret of charming off bullets."

"Col. Conynghame would undoubtedly have become a great general, had the war continued; do you not think so, Mr. de Grey?" interrogated Pella Morton, turning her beautiful Greek face toward de Grey, with an expression of the deepest interest.

"Undoubtedly, Miss Morton; that is, I think so. Ralph Conynghame is talented and energetic and—ambitious also," responded de Grey glancing from Pella to Breta and mentally comparing the cold, uncertain glint of Pella's steel-blue eyes with the warm, steadfast light of Breta's.

"We shall see your cousin to-morrow at the picnic, shall we not, Mr. de Grey? I have a great admiration for soldiers," said Frank, with a laugh, having taken a comprehensive note of de Grey's mental comparison.

"Weather permitting the picnic to come off, Miss Bowers," acquiesced de Grey.

"Are you a weather-prophet, Mr. de Grey? Will it be fair to-morrow?" asked Pella, with a sweet smile.

"I have always observed, Miss Morton, that

the weather has a trick of reversing my predictions. Had you not better consult 'Probabilities?' "

"Have you read to-day's *Times*, Miss Rutherford?" airily asked Pella, in a honey-sweet voice and with a rippling laugh.

"If I mistake not, Miss Morton, the indications are for a falling barometer. We may possibly have a thunder shower."

"It behooves us to take our water-proof wraps, and—" The school-bell, ringing loudly just then, interrupted Pella, and de Grey took his leave.

XII.

“DID I NOT TELL YOU HE IS DEEP?”

UP rose the sun on the lovely dewy morning following, with abundant promise of a pleasant day, and up rose the expectant young aspirants for a delightful change from plodding school-life.

As the shadow of the towering mountain left the cosey valley over which, like a guardian giant, it stood sentinel, the pretty village of Lea at its base, circled by wooded hills, looked, in the clearing mist, more than ever like a huge water-lily, with one petal missing where the bend in the river came.

Winding up and around one of the lesser hills—the hill on which stood Miss Rutherford's seminary,—was the road to Rocky Glen, and it had been agreed upon that all the vehicles should meet and start at the same time from the school.

Many of the guests—the de Greys, the Judge Waltons, the Gen. Leightons, and others among the village dignitaries—went in their own carriages. And so prompt had all been, that the cavalcade left Miss Rutherford's a little before the appointed time.

To the juveniles the picnic was an important event, and the brilliancy of their expectations seemed graduated by the brightness and hugeness of the bows of their wide sashes, and the depth of embroidery to their wide collars.

Descending the hill the party struck into the river road, and from between the crisp lights and shadows of the early morning glimpses were caught, through the intervening trees, of the ever-winding river, sparkling in the newly risen sun, showing here a sharp curve, where it came tumbling and foaming over rocks, and beyond a placid pool in which the graceful fountain elms and the stately forest oak lay mirrored as in a glass.

Passing the old feed-mill, made immortal by the charming painting of one of our well-known artists, they drove over the rough, rustic bridge that spanned the clear, spring-fed waters of a trout-filled tributary to the river,—so clear,

that the little brook took its tints from the varied foliage and mossy rocks margining its banks. And many were the jokes and quips volunteered by the gay party as they noted the posted placards warning all intruders from fishing in the tempting stream, where the speckled trout lay looking up from their pebbly beds, cool and saucy.

A sharp bend in the road brought the party in full view of the falls. The suddenness with which the tumbling, roaring, foaming, splashing, dashing little cataract came upon the sight, on turning the sharp bend, was always sure to elicit an involuntary "Oh!" and the combined and many-voiced "Ohs!" from the numerous vehicles that morning, as the vista broke on them, formed quite a startling chorus.

The glen, where they were to meet, within view of the falls, and surrounded by rocks, on which and between which grew trees in the wildest, most rugged manner, possessed in its centre a velvety lawn, well adapted for tennis and croquet. And so full were Nellie Bowers and the other juveniles of croquet, that hugging their mallets closely in their arms as they were helped down from the omnibus, they had staked

off their grounds before all the party had fairly alighted.

Frank, magnificent with her dark, oriental eyes and raven hair, and in her stylish gown so becoming to her, was sauntering over the green sward with Breta, making funny remarks about every thing that came in her way.

Breta, always lovely, seemed this morning the embodiment of loveliness in her soft, gray, well-fitting gown. The charm of her face, so varying in expression, and the beauty of her features, so exquisitely moulded, were never eclipsed by the brilliant Frank Bowers—who reminded one of an Eastern sunset—but beside her were accented instead, and made more apparent.

The de Greys, with Mr. Black and the rest of their party, coming up to them, they were introduced by Selma to Col. Conynghame and Count Gueret, whereupon Selma, with Mr. Black, went to rejoin Miss Rutherford.

The count, dark to swarthinness, with a saturnine countenance, a wiry, withy form, and movements quick and angular, like those of a well-conditioned crab used to polite society, was so impressively imbued with that ease of man-

ner, intensely French, that they were all freely chatting at once ; he animadverting on the extreme earliness of the hour, and extolling the beauty of the drive, the falls, and the glen. De Grey having just then monopolized Breta's attention, the count turned to Frank.

"Shall we not go and see the kitchen arrangements, Miss Bowers? I take great interest in camp-cooking," said he, with a thin smile that pointed his moustache upward.

"You do also, Col. Conynghame, do you not?" asked Frank, turning to Conynghame.

Conynghame, tall, erect, and with a soldierly carriage, was possessed of such a marked courtliness of manner, devoid of ostentation, devoid of striking attitudes, and was so polite by nature and culture, that in his presence you felt good-breeding to be the most desirable of arts. His simple title of colonel seemed insufficient for so much stateliness and elegance of demeanor, and you felt like addressing him as "My lord duke," or "Excellency," or "Highness."

"I have seen the time, Miss Bowers," said he, lifting his hat to Frank, and bowing in response to her invitation as they walked on, "when, if I had not taken an interest in camp-

cooking, it would have gone hard with the poor fellows who depended on others to do the thinking for them."

"It was well you had something to cook, or it would have gone hard with you as well," returned Frank, with a laugh.

"Somehow, when so many brave fellows are worn out with a long march, short rations, and hard fighting, one forgets to think of one's self," said Conynghame, lifting a mental hat to Frank. He always seemed, in conversing with ladies, when not lifting an actual hat, as occasion demanded, to be lifting a mental one.

"Let us offer thanks in our breakfast grace that we do not have to be stinted in our omelet and coffee." The count spoke with such mocking lightness, that Frank, prepared to rap out a startling rejoinder, chanced to meet Conynghame's fine eyes regarding her with an attentive look, as though waiting for her to speak, and she addressed him instead.

"I also, with Breta Garnet, had my patriotic fires. Mine took the form of pocket-money. All my allowance I regularly sent, besides interviewing papa repeatedly for more liberal supplies. And if the poor soldiers ever fell short

in their rations it was all owing to the question of pocket-money."

"Then Miss Garnet was also patriotic?" asked Conynghame, laughing, and looking back a little to where Breta and de Grey were following them.

"Immensely," returned Frank, also looking back, and noting that Breta was evidently much interested in what de Grey was saying. "But her patriotism took a more active form than mine. She served under Garibaldi, you know, encouraging him in his hour of need."

Conynghame regarded Frank in a little uncertainty for an instant, then his fine face lighted up with a comprehensive smile.

"I see," said he.

"Very kind, very considerate of you, Miss Bowers, to deny yourself of all your pocket-money, foregoing candy and that," remarked the count, still in his light, mocking tone.

"It was owing quite as much to the kind, considerate hearts that cared for us as to our own exertions, that the war was carried to a successful issue," returned Conynghame, his well-modulated baritone contrasting pleasantly with the count's cynical, incisive voice.

The huge fire that crackled and blazed in its rocky fireplace, with the glancing to and fro before it of the cooks and their aids, which now opened on their vision, formed a scene highly suggestive, the count declared, of a witch's *sabbat*.

"Did you ever see a witch's *sabbat*, Count Gueret?" asked Frank.

"Oh, a vast number, Miss Bowers—on the stage."

Breta and de Grey here joining them, they all stood watching the culinary arrangements for a few moments, then sauntering on and taking a circuit around by the rocks on their way back to the lawn, they came upon Miss de Grey and Miss Rutherford, who, with Mrs. Gen. Leighton, Mrs. Judge Walton, and several other notable matrons, were superintending the waiting-men and maids in the disposition of the tables, that, already covered with spotless damask and surmounted with a profusion of flowers, cut-glass, and silver, contrasted gaily with their green and rocky surroundings.

Counsellor Black, entirely too ponderous with law for tennis or any of the light games all around, was standing near Selma ; her fair, kind face lit up by one of the most lovable smiles,

and her eyes of deep violet, that in his presence grew deeper in hue, having evidently more attractions for him.

"I find myself greatly interested in the people," remarked the count to Frank, as they found themselves again on the lawn. "That tall, slender gentleman, for instance, with the long, straggling gray hair, and with a fishing-rod in his hand,—who may he be, Miss Bowers?"

Frank was talking so merrily with Conyng-hame she did not hear the count's question.

"His name is Addison," replied Breta, answering for her. "He is half-artist, half-philosopher, and all fisherman. He paints trout to the life, and his pictures sell faster than he can finish them."

"I purchased a couple of them yesterday; they are quite wonderful in their way," said de Grey, with his quietest manner. "They hang in the dining-room; you may recollect them, Gueret."

"Oh, those," returned the count; "yes, I see. And, Miss Garnet, that strikingly pretty girl now talking with your trout-artist,—the young lady all brown as to hair and eyes,—who may she be?"

"One of Miss Rutherford's pupils, Miss Sadie Burrill," responded Breta; "one of Miss Rutherford's *very best* pupils."

"And the belle of the school," added Frank, turning from Conynghame to the count.

"The vivid rosiness of her lips and cheeks and the bright sparkle of her hazel eyes warrant the choice. But Miss Rutherford's school is rich in belles, I find. Is that young lady standing beside Miss Burrill, with the blonde hair, who has been looking this way so often, and is now examining the falls through Mr. Addison's Claude Lorraine glass,—is she also one of Miss Rutherford's belles?"

"*Tu as le dis*," replied Frank, laughing. "She is Miss Pella Morton. Would you like an introduction to her, Count Gueret?" asked Frank, with mischievous eagerness.

"You are too kind," returned the count, in French.

"Going up to Breta, under pretence of adjusting the pretty bow at her throat, she whispered: "Keep Col. Conynghame with you, under penalty of death, while I ship the count."

The bilious count was entirely carried away by the Grecian features, spotless complexion,

and blonde beauty of Pella. This Frank saw with a feeling akin to rapture, as, leaving him with her, she returned to Breta and de Grey, Conynghame meeting her half way, and the four then, as with one accord, wandered off into the shade of the woods and down by the river, Miss Rutherford saying as they passed her: "We are to breakfast at nine, and we dine at three."

"Do you believe in ghosts, Col. Conynghame?" abruptly asked Frank. They were sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree in view of the falls, and had been cosily conversing on various topics of interest.

"Do you believe in ghosts, Miss Bowers?" returned Conynghame, lifting his mental hat to Frank, not in the least taken aback by the unexpected question.

"Most solemnly I do."

"Then most solemnly I also do," said Conynghame.

"Then you *do* believe in ghosts?" insisted Frank.

"I never saw one, Miss Bowers."

"Did you ever hear one, or any thing supernatural?" enquired Frank.

"Nor ever heard, or saw sight or sound but that could be easily accounted for?"

"I wish I could arrive at what you really do believe, Col. Conynghame," urged Frank, with a laugh.

"A confession of faith! Well, then, I believe we have overhead one of the most charming skylines, and at our feet one of the most picturesque landscapes, and sitting beside me two of the most lovely—"

"Oh, I do not mean that," broke in Frank; "that, of course, I know I am wonderfully handsome; my glass tells me that; what is called a striking girl—though I never struck any one to my recollection,—and that my friend Breta here is lovely beyond description; my eyes tell me that. But what I like to get at is what people really are. I know what Breta is, and I know what Mr. de Grey thinks and believes."

"Do you, Miss Bowers? If so, please tell me, for I really do not know myself," interposed de Grey. "And as for Ralph Conynghame, what he really is or believes is past finding out, he is such a deep character."

At this they all laughed.

"I see I must defend myself," said Conyng-

hame, "from the profundity aspersed by affirming that since I learned that the thousandth trituration of a grain of any drug is more potent to cure than the grain itself, I have grown so catholic in my beliefs that I am ready to endorse ghosts or any thing else. In fact, the philosophy of ghosts is the philosophy of homœopathy carried to its ultimate, is it not? For as the thousandth trituration of a grain of mercury can contain no perceivable particle of the drug itself, only the spirit—so to speak—of the drug, so the ghost of a human being being only the spirit, is without its crude, physical form. And, if we credit tradition and revelation, we must accord more power to the spirit out of the body than in it."

"Did I not tell you he is deep?" said de Grey.

"I am glad you believe in ghosts, Col. Conygnhame, that is, if you do, for you will probably make the acquaintance of some at Elmwood, Mr. de Grey having bought them all up. But the hitch seems to be that, like Owen Glendower's, they will not come when he doth call."

"They probably are sensible shadows, pre-

ferring the society of ladies to that of men," returned Conynghame.

"Breta and I never saw or heard one of them, so that cannot be," affirmed Frank.

"Dropping shadows for something substantial," said Breta, "are we not overstaying our time, and are we not all very hungry?"

"It is just nine," replied Conynghame, looking at his watch. "Evidently delightful conversation has more charms for us than the prospect of a good breakfast."

"I for one am almost famished!" exclaimed Frank, laughing, "but I did not like to be the first to own it."

"Let us return at once, on Miss Bowers' account," said de Grey, offering his hand to assist Breta to rise. "Not that I have any personal interest in breakfast," he added.

"There is brother Tom!" exclaimed Frank, as they arrived at the encampment. "Do, Col. Conynghame, go with me and help rescue him. He looks like a stray wolf in a flock of sheep."

Brother Tom being reached and welcomed warmly by Frank, who had not seen him for two years, she introduced him to Conynghame,

and then took him over to Breta, saying as she introduced him to her and de Grey:

"Brother Tom has but just returned from the East. Has seen the Tycoon of Japan, the Shah of Persia, and the Great Mogul. Has seen the Holy Land and the unholy land about the Levant, where the Turks cut people's heads off, and buy and sell women. Has seen the pyramids and the needles and every thing worth seeing and every thing not worth seeing. And now, Tom, give an account of yourself. How long have you been here?"

"Give us a rest, Sis.,—let me catch my breath, I feel so entirely taken possession of. It is quite cheering to find you have lost neither your good looks nor your habit of tormenting. Well, then, I have been here not over five minutes. The conductor let me off at the flag station about a half a mile below, and directed me to Glen Falls," replied Tom, with so much of his sister's expression and features that they might have been taken for twins, except that Tom had some three years more over his head.

"Come with me, Tom, and I will take you to pay your respects to Miss Rutherford," said Frank.

"Thank you, Sis., you must take good care of me now, for I was beginning to feel, like the lost Pleiad, in this strange crowd," responded her brother.

"I beg you will return with your sister, Mr. Bowers, for she is under a positive engagement to appear at the breakfast-table with me," urged Conynghame.

"Tom, you must see that I keep all my engagements," said Frank, as she took her brother's arm.

After introducing him to Miss Rutherford and Miss de Grey—who were on their way to the breakfast-tables—Frank told him she was going to make him acquainted with one of the prettiest and best girls in the world.

"If she is half so pretty as that lovely Breta you have always been bragging about, Sis., to whom I was just introduced, I shall consider myself a lucky dog ; for I see she is likely to be spoken for by that handsome, dreamy, de Grey."

"Could you see that, Tom, and in such a moment of time?"

"A fellow that has been around the world learns to use his eyes, Sis. Why, that de Grey

chap could not keep *his* eyes from her a moment. He is catawampusly, as the boys call it, ‘chewed up.’ Show me the other, Sis.”

“I see, Tom, you have not forgotten your classical education (I allude to modern classics) while abroad. Now the young lady to whom I am going to introduce you is also my friend ; and—I can tell you—is a staving fine girl.”

“Trot her out, Sis.,” said Tom ; “but let me remark *en passant* that I see you have not grown rusty either in the classics—I allude to modern classics also.”

“Tom, we are Bowers ; I the right and you the left Bower. No, I shall not trot her out, but shall trot you to her, and you must wait on her at breakfast and be excessively polite. That is she talking with that white-haired Judge Walton ; and Sadie Burril, let me tell you—”

“Oh, it is Miss Burrill, is it, of whom you have written to me? She is quite on the Breta Garnet style, I see—”

“No, Tom, you don’t see. Wait till you are acquainted with her before you pass judgment on Sadie,” replied Frank.

At breakfast, Breta and Frank, seated next de Grey and Conynghame, and opposite Tom

Bowers and Sadie Burrill, and everybody else seated near every one they wished to be near, all things went lovely.

Among the rest of the luxuries and elegancies that, to borrow the expression of the old-time novelists, the table groaned under, was a huge dish of trout; and Mr. Atkinson and his satellites were the heroes of the hour while the trout were being discussed. They had caught their trout at daylight, and Mr. Atkinson was showing some of his flies to the gentleman seated beside him.

"Let me see your flies and bugs, Mr. Atkinson, please? Are they June bugs? And what flies do you fish with in July and August? Do you impale them alive on those hooks? How cruel! I shall never eat another trout," and Frank reached out her exquisitely modelled little brown hand toward Mr. Atkinson, but one seat from her.

Delighted that so handsome a young lady should interest herself in the contents of his fly-book, he leaned over toward her past Conyng-hame, his open book in hand.

"They are made to resemble living flies as nearly as possible, you see, Miss Bowers," said

he. "Trout like these little black gnats; and in the twilight, these moth millers, and this—called the royal coachman. And on bright days they like this fly, the queen; or this, called the grisly king."

"I see, the whole royal family. How beautiful they are!" exclaimed Frank. "What is this bright fellow?" she asked, selecting one from the open book before her.

"The scarlet ibis, Miss Bowers. It is entirely red, you see. And that dainty little fly with white wings and green body is the coachman; similar, as to wings, to the royal coachman. It is a very killing fly."

"And these with gray wings, yellow body, and scarlet tail?"

"We call them the professor,—with one of these I caught nearly all my trout this morning. You see we do not use June bugs, Miss Bowers."

"And these, Mr. Atkinson,—these sprawly little black things without wings?"

"These, Miss Bowers, are hackles. Trout probably take them for some kind of spider. They are very killing at times."

Much interested in the flies, Frank called

Breta's attention to them, but her head was turned toward General Leighton, who was talking to her with great earnestness, de Grey also listening. So Frank showed them to Sadie, across the glitter of cut glass and the perfume of heliotrope, pansies, and roses.

XIII.

ÆSTHETICISM.

ON the archery ground, after breakfast, the contest ran high, when a new impetus was given to the efforts of the contestants by Dunraven, who had just arrived with Mr. Whyte.

It was soon found to be useless to draw a bow against the skill of Dunraven, whose arrows, as though they were birds with consciousness in their winged flight, were sure to find the centre each time one left his bow.

And so easily did he effect his success, his superior height, breadth of chest and shoulders, and commanding grace all showing to such admirable advantage, that all around him seemed quite dwarfed and of little account in his presence.

"Like poor old Uncle Ned, I shall have to 'give up de fiddle an' de bow'—oh—oh!"

exclaimed Frank, with a brilliant look and laugh as she laid aside her quiver and bow. "I was quite distinguishing myself, Mr. Dunraven, until you so mercilessly extinguished me with your sharp-shooting."

Dunraven bowed and smiled, showing a set of teeth as strong, white, and even as those of a young royal Bengal tiger.

Selma was saying something to her brother, and little Nellie Bowers and Gracie Gay had just run up to Breta to tell her for the tenth time that morning what a perfectly splendid time they were having, when Dunraven crossed over to Breta and offered her his arm "for a short promenade," he said, as he towered down over her with a grand chivalrous air that proclaimed: "All I am, all I achieve, I lay at your feet."

Breta walked with him for a little, until, declaring herself fatigued, she sat on the camp-chair he offered her under a great tree; he throwing himself gracefully at her feet on a grassy projection formed by the root of the tree, and supporting himself with careless ease on one elbow.

He made himself wonderfully interesting (as he could) in an animated taking-her-by-storm

way, giving her the details of some recent doings at her aunt's in London ; reading aloud, with amusing commentaries, portions of her aunt's letter that he had just that morning received.

"Your Aunt Jane is eagerly anxious to see you, Breta. Shall I write her that you will some day soon make her a visit with me?" asked Dunraven, so lightly that his meaning in the coupling himself with her was covered by the assumed indifference of his tone.

"I fear not, Noel," replied Breta, with quiet decision, but also with a wistful, pleading look in her tender eyes, that he seemed to lack the last fine instinct to heed.

"Do not trouble yourself to say more just at present, Breta *mia*," returned he, quickly. "But recollect, *carissima*, you have long ago given me the benefit of the doubt," and he laughed lightly and musically ; but with all his airiness he was watchfully mindful of the least change in the varying expression of her face.

"Let London go," said he, as Breta made no reply, and he swept the arm on which he was not leaning, in a graceful semicircular curve from him, "Italy remains,—warm, sunny,

song-loving Italy. You can never get away from the recollection of the old Italian days, Breta."

"Never," replied Breta, gently, the wistful look returning to her eyes.

"And all that old Italian life is so minutely inwoven with your unworthy cousin Noel, that with your affection for Italy, for Milan, there must also be some little affection for him, *cara* Breta?"

"You are right, Noel,—a great deal of affection for him," returned Breta, her tone almost sad in its quietness.

"And now we will talk no more of your cousin, Noel Dunraven," said he, lightly, adroitly changing the subject. "I will tell you a curious incident." And again he interested her by a graphic description of his meeting with a certain New York celebrity.

Breta listened, sustaining her part of the conversation with the same pitying gentleness that Frank had so often observed and marvelled at when she had seen her talking with Dunraven.

Just then Mr. Whyte came up, and at a glance saw how pale Breta had grown, and

divined the cause,—that last fine instinct he never lacking.

“Noel,” said he, “Gen. Leighton would like you to give him some facts as to the present condition of social æstheticism abroad. Will you?”

Secretly flattered that so distinguished a military character should seek information of him, Dunraven was yet more unwilling to lose the present opportunity for a prolonged interview with Breta, but Breta herself decided the matter by saying:

“Of course, Noel will. Let us go at once, Uncle Ray. See, Gen. Leighton looks this way and expects us,” and as she put her arm through her uncle’s, he felt that she was perceptibly trembling. Tacitly acknowledging the little odd, grateful look she gave him, at once appealing and imperative, by one of his twisted smiles, they all three proceeded (little Mr. Whyte looking like one of Gulliver’s Lilliputians beside the young giant, his nephew) to where Gen. Leighton had a little court around him. M. Dupont, a French diplomat; Judge Walton, Squire Atwood, Counsellor Black, Count Gueret, and others of less note, were all

seated on camp-chairs, projections of rock, or stumps of trees, discussing political questions and enjoying the busy scene on the lawn before them.

Dunraven, handing Breta a chair beside her uncle, stood himself, giving his information with such an understanding of his subject, that little by little he found himself delivering a lecture to the general's lead.

They were on a grassy eminence overlooking the lawn, and as Dunraven proceeded, group after group came to listen; until finally a well-packed semicircle was formed in front of the rocky rostrum on which he stood, all attentive to his elegantly chosen words and gestures.

Dating the modern æsthetic movement, the English Renaissance, from the Gothic revival and Pre-Raphaelistic association that sprang from Ruskin's teachings, he said the movement might be called the Decorative Revival, as the whole effort was simply a revolt from the prevailing ugliness everywhere manifested, in favor of the worship of the beautiful. He affirmed that the realization of the ideal was becoming daily more manifest in home-adornment, dress, and

all the higher forms of art as well, through the impetus given by the æsthetic movement ; that the realm of taste, with beauty for queen, enshrining perfection of form and color, was at last finding a realization in absolute unity of conception. The sun-flower and lily school with their utterly-utterisms, their precious-preciousness, intense-intensities, and hollow-hollownesses, he ridiculed as belonging to the spurious outgrowth of fashionable pretence. He gave a number of utterly-utter anecdotes that elicited peals of laughter. He quoted Ruskin, Keats, Shelley, and also the professedly æsthetic authorities ; and wound up by saying that until Ruskin, holding up Turner as an example, had insisted that nature was the only model to study and copy, young artists were being taught to copy solely from the lifeless models of the academies ; which was equivalent to insisting that young poets and musicians should copy masters in verse or music instead of striking out new fields for themselves, which, alas ! for their readers and hearers, many had already done and were doing. And here he provoked another laugh by the way he said it.

Various were the remarks elicited by the

æsthetic lecture, Gen. Leighton expressing himself as having enjoyed it greatly; and many went up to Dunraven, shaking hands with him and congratulating him for so pleasant a diversion.

"Oh! is n't he a perfect love?" exclaimed Miss Beebe to her companion, Miss Rivers.

"That is the ninety-ninth time you 've said it," returned the amiable Miss Rivers.

"I certainly never saw such exquisitely graceful attitudes nor heard so fine a voice in any speaker before in all my life," affirmed Lina Beebe.

"You had better tell him so and done with it. There he goes with Miss de Grey."

"Oh, he knows it well enough."

"Yes, and your admiration won't help you one jot, Lina Beebe; I can tell you that. Breta Garnet is his little game."

"Anybody could tell, Clara Rivers, that you had a lot of rowdy brothers at home by the way you talk. Of course Breta Garnet is his attraction. She's just too lovely for any thing, and every one is attracted to her. Yes, and Noel Dunraven will be the one to get her in spite of Mr. de Grey and every one else. It is

the steadily persistent, never dashed by rebuffs, who win the day."

"You are mighty pat with Mr. Dunraven's name, Lina. But whoever gets him it won't be you," asserted Miss Rivers.

"Of course it won't be me, you spiteful thing. I have just barely been introduced to him, and I never expect to be any better acquainted with him. You and Pella Morton would make a—*not* good span, for you would chew each other up like the Kilkenny cats. If anybody can stand you, I can; for I don't care a button what you say," and Lina Beebe laughed merrily.

By this time Noel Dunraven's speech might wellnigh have been forgotten, there were so many passing things to interest and attract; but Squire Atwood was still growling to any one he could get to listen to him about "this sort of thing." He said it was "all bosh"; that no one could say: "Take such an attitude, look thus, wear such a dress, and you will express intensity of soul. No one," carped the squire, "can set up a standard of thought or feeling. It—this modern æsthetic nonsense—is an extravagant and distorted outgrowth of a truly great and much-needed reform started into life

by John Ruskin, who never dreamed of the hideous thing that was going to be shadowing and confounded with his teachings, any more than Keats or Shelley dreamed of what their verses could be tortured into. And now it is creeping over to this country,—this spurious thing, that has never done any thing really for the furtherance of true art,—to spoil our manners, vitiate our taste, and corrupt our morals, as it has done abroad."

But no one paid much heed to the squire, as he was so well known to be a cynic, who was always snarling on the opposition side.

The day was progressing, and Dunraven, finding he could not get another opportunity with Breta apart from de Grey, vanished from the grounds.

It was half past four o'clock; the guests had all dined, and so sumptuously that even Squire Atwood had become smooth and smiling.

Of a sudden came a vivid flash of lightning and a heavy clap of thunder.

A man, clad in homespun blouse and butter-nut trousers, mounted on a horse and leading another, appearing as though dropped down from the clouds as precursor to the threatened rain, spoke as from a rostrum :

"Ladies and gents," said he, "you will have to make tracks up to my house as fast as you kin git up and git. I'm farmer Crowley, and own all about here. My house is big, and will hold the hull on you. That air rain will be down on us in the shake of a sheep's tail. Pete, my man, said it wa'n't goin' to rain; but I jest went fur Pete bald-headed, and ef he did n't gear up quicker 'n lightnin', you bet! And here I am with them hosses to pull up yer waggin of vittles inter my barn. And, ladies and gents, when your carriages come back from Lea they can pick you up at my house, jest up on the hill there. But you 'd all better git."

All started for the farmer's house without waiting for a second invitation, another sharp flash of lightning and the large loose rain drops serving as so many notes of warning; the waiters, piling the baskets and packages of ladies' wraps and belongings, with little attention to order, into the covered wagon, while the farmer was putting to his horses, waiters and farmer rode merrily up into the great barn of the farm.

The rain, seeming to understand the necessity of the case, held off for a little. And just

as the party were all fairly housed, it came down in torrents,—a bucketful seemingly to each drop,—the lightning flashing and the thunder crashing and rolling, while the sky became black almost as night.

Suddenly as the thunder-shower came up just as suddenly it subsided. And in less than two hours the whole party were standing out in the sunshine preparing to get into the carriages before the door of farmer Crowley's homestead.

"Where is Nelly Bowers? She was here but a moment ago," said Miss Rutherford, who was counting heads.

"I was just now conversing with Miss Nelly," remarked de Grey, casting his eyes around.

"Nelly was asking us something about the trains," added Breta. The "us" sounded very suggestive, Frank thought, but she did not comment on it then, but instead suddenly exclaimed :

"That is her voice ; Nell. is screaming for me. She 's down on the railroad track," and Frank dashed off across the road in the direction of the call, Breta hastening after her, followed by de Grey and Conynghame.

The piping demand for "Frank" brought her to the railroad, that for several miles ran along what was called the "dug-way." Down in this dug-way was Nell., vainly striving to climb up the slippery clay of its steep bank, that had been converted into a thick paste by the rain.

"Here, Nell., catch hold of my scarf!" And Frank, impetuously unwinding her long scarf from her shoulders as the others came up to her, threw the end of it to Nelly. But, unfortunately, standing too near the edge, a portion of the soft bank crumbled away from under her feet, and she caught hold of Breta's hand to steady herself.

Slipping more and more, de Grey, thinking to save both from sliding down the bank, leaned forward and grasped Breta's arm. But the impetus already gained by Frank was too great, and in much less time than it has taken to narrate the disaster, all three were sliding rapidly down the embankment.

That accomplished, the question arose, after a certain amount of inevitable laughter, what was to be done?

Frank suggested ropes; and Conynghame, from the top, looking up and down each way,

said he could see no break in the banks on either side of the road.

"No, Ralph," replied de Grey, "it is one interminable sliding-plane as far as the eye can reach, and, as Miss Bowers proposes, ropes seem to be the only remedy."

"I will go at once to the farm-house—"

"Perhaps the farmer has a balloon," interrupted Breta.

"A balloon by all means, Ralph," assented de Grey.

"Here comes Mr. Bowers, he may suggest something," said Conynghame from his height above them.

"We are down here, Tom!" exclaimed Frank.

"So I perceive, Sis.," he replied, looking down over the inclined plane. "Is it pleasant down there?"

"Stop your fooling, Tom, and help Col. Conynghame devise a plan for getting us out, that we need not be compelled to walk all the way to Lea on railroad ties. A motion has been made and seconded for ropes and another for a balloon."

"Stop your laughing, Sis., and listen. About

a quarter of a mile below this are steps leading up to a platform; a flag-station, you know, colonel. I walked here from that flag-station this morning, and know all about it. You will have a short promenade in that sequestered valley, some rough steps to ascend, and I will have a carriage at the platform for you before you get there."

"We shall owe you an eternal debt of gratitude, Mr. Bowers," said de Grey. "Ralph, will you go with Mr. Bowers, or, returning to your boyish sports, take a slide down the bank and join us?"

"Boyish sports have a powerful charm for me. I will join you, Joslyn. Excuse me, Bowers," and planting his heel firmly in the yielding clay, Conynghame contrived to take a few steps and then slid the rest of the way, and on his safe arrival there was another laugh.

"I will assuage Miss Rutherford's fears and be at the platform in time," exclaimed Tom Bowers, as he hurried off laughing.

"You little witch, how did you ever manage to get down here?" asked Frank of her sister.

Nelly, standing big-eyed during the scene,

her white dress and cardinal sash so deeply dyed with yellow clay that she appeared rather stylishly trimmed with the fashionable old-gold color, replied that she heard the cars whistle and thought she could run and see them pass and get back in plenty of time for the carriages ; but leaning over too far, as the cars passed, she had slipped and rolled down the bank.

While Nelly was explaining, they were laughing and walking merrily on, taking the ties, some of which near together and some far apart made the avoidance of the mud quite a science.

"Miss Nelly," said de Grey, giving her his hand to help her spring over a wide pool, "you were very wise in taking your slide after the train had gone by instead of before."

"Oh, don't, Mr. de Grey! You make me shudder! Don't pile up the agony ; we pass our whole lives on the fence of life. I never like to look on the dark side of the fence until I am compelled to," returned Frank.

"I came very near the dark side of the fence once," observed Conynghame ; and he related an incident in his war experience that was very thrilling.

"I often wonder whether the bright or the dark side preponderates, but conclude for the bright side," said Breta.

"The bright side of life without a question," acquiesced de Grey, helping Breta over a muddy rivulet into which she had nearly slipped.

"There comes a train, I hear it whistle!" exclaimed Frank.

"And from around this curve!" and de Grey sprang lightly to the opposite track, and ran partly up the bank. "The train is coming on your track, Ralph. Get the ladies over on this side, and as quickly as possible," urged he from his slippery point of observation.

The train thundered by just as they were all fairly on the opposite track. "Another dark side escaped," Frank said. And then, on rounding the curve, they were in sight of the platform and of Tom Bowers, who was sitting on the driver's seat of a carriage with Sadie Burrill beside him.

And a merrier party of six (with a very silent child of eleven, wrapped in a carriage rug to keep her from taking cold) never drove home after a thunder-shower from a picnic.

Upon leaving the feminine portion of the

carriage-load at the seminary, de Grey insisted so strenuously that Bowers should return with him and Ralph to Elmwood, instead of going to a hotel, as Bowers intended, that he was forced to comply.

XIV.

THE BLACK ART.

THERE were numerous workmen engaged in resuscitating the grounds and house at Elmwood. And although the plan was for the most part de Grey's, Selma was so enthusiastic in helping him carry it out, that the engineering process came finally to devolve as much on her as on him.

And to carry out their plans with ample advice, the three young ladies from the seminary (and Count Gueret's especial admiration—Miss Morton also) were invited to spend all the time at Elmwood that Miss Rutherford could spare to them ; and vehicles were kept going back and forth in the liveliest manner,—the gentlemen all remaining indefinitely.

Weeds disappeared like magic ; trellises came upright ; vines seemed to train themselves, so orderly and systematically did the

workmen progress. No one was disturbed ; but all entered into the spirit of the enterprise with so much zest, that it was like a continuous holiday.

The young ladies spent all of their Saturdays with Selma, and on the first of these Saturdays the Cupids, Venuses, Mercuries, and Apollos, with the other heathen deities, were made smiling and happy in the amount of sympathy and assistance to an upright standing again in the world they received from so many professional workers and so many lookers on.

Selma's hospitality was boundless, and as gracefully and tactfully bestowed as it was munificent.

All were out in the park after dinner on this first Saturday, and were grouped around the sculptor and the garden artist, who, with their men, were unravelling a certain complicated classical story. Frank and her brother were loitering on their way toward them.

"I assure you, Sis., that your friend Miss Sadie Burrill is one of the most delightfully agreeable young ladies I ever met. And as for that Prince Conyghame of yours—"

"Of mine! Now, Tom, don't go off on your

hobby-horse at so keen a gallop; you may throw yourself."

"Oh, now, Frank, don't. Any one with half an eye can see that Prince Conynghame is soft on you, and—"

"There, Tom, don't fatigue yourself with conjecture. If you are fishing to know what I think of him, I can tell you. He is not one whit like us to begin with. We Bowers are all splurgists, and Col. Conynghame takes time to use his brain and think. I admire him excessively because he thinks, and because he is so polished—unlike us again—and—"

"I 'll have my revenge yet, Sis., if you have gone me one better this time. But I say, Frank, dare I mention that our goatee'd count, with his saffron face, is dead sweet on that pale, Grecian-profiled Miss—what-is-her-name?"

"And a good match they are, that is all I can advance," said Frank, abruptly.

"I see, Sis., you do not admire your friend, Miss Pella."

"Never you mind, Tom, whom I admire. But Tom, whatever we Bowers are, we are ladies and gentlemen, with the true instincts and fine conceptions of ladies and gentlemen, and, what

is more, we have consciences and hearts. We are a trifle slang-y, and that (and Frank, softening, laughed), but,—well, Miss Morton does not number among my friends. She is the friend of no one but herself—*al solito* and *per se*.”

“Yes, I remember you have been studying both Italian and Latin, Sis. And after agreeing with you that we Bowers are ladies and gentlemen—why, Sis., you are one of the most aristocratic and lady-like-looking girls I ever met at home or abroad,—I will add : *Mole ruit sua*, and if Molly don’t rue it sure, Pella will shu-a. She ’ll be ‘crushed by the weight’ of your displeasure.”

“Oh, Tom, you cannot crush me that way, I ’ve been studying French too :

“ ‘ *Ce monde est pleine de fous, et qui n’en veut pas voir,
Doit se renfermer seul, et casser son miroir.*’

But to tell you the truth, Tom,” continued his sister, her mischievous smile subsiding, “a few languages and a little music are all I do know. I don’t know grammar ; Miss Rutherford cannot pound it into my head. I have a vague smattering of some of the *ologies*, am pretty well up in literature and rhetoric, but as for arithme-

tic—I do not know even the multiplication table. And, Tom, I leave school next month—my education completed. Is it not horrible? This is between us, Tom.”

“Locked up safe here,” said Tom, laying his hand melodramatically on his heart. “But to think what Prince Conynghame has before him. He will have to regularly invest in slates, pencils, and spelling-books, and set up school. But, I say, Sis., is this universal in Miss Rutherford’s school? Your friend Miss Burrill, for instance? Is she also—shall I have to—”

“No, Tom, not a bit of it. Sadie knows it all, and how she has contrived it I cannot tell; and the charming part of it is that no one would dream she knows so much, she is so modest and unassuming, and so—”

“Hold on, Frank, do! I am bad off enough now. Don’t make matters worse with me by such wholesale praise of her. So, she ’s regularly sapped, is she?—as we used to say in college.”

“*You* are regularly sapped, Tom, and in a different sense from what your college means: *Sapientia prima est stultitiâ caruisse*, as Horace says.”

"As bad as that, Sis.? But if Miss Burrill has the *sapientia prima* that will 'exempt her from folly,' it will not make so much matter about me, you know."

"Miss Burrill is not to be joked about, Tom; she is too good for jokes or jokers."

"That is what I am afraid of, Frank, for it is serious with me, I assure you."

"Miss Rutherford is prouder of Miss Burrill than of any other pupil in her school, and with good reason."

"Miss Rutherford is not proud of you, Sis.?"

"I am afraid she 's not. But that is not strange, I being your sister, you know, Tom."

"Hit him again, Sis., he 's got no friends. But come, let us go over there where those marble ladies and gentlemen are thickest, and join Miss de Grey and the others before I am utterly extinguished."

Rising from the luxurious seat in the pretty, renovated summer-house, where they had been resting, Frank started on by the side of her brother.

"Here comes Prince Conynghame after you," said he. "Jove! what a brow! and what a presence! and what a bang-up tie! I thought

I could tie a cravat, but he beats me out of sight ; I see I shall have to give up my little Sis., my playmate of so many years. It is not in the heart of woman to withstand such a tie as that."

"Bear in mind, Tom, I owe you one, and when it comes it will be a scorcher."

"The sword of—what-do-you-call-him suspended over my head by a long black hair."

"‘The Sword of Bunker Hill,’ perhaps you mean, Tom," and Frank, turning to Conynghame, said : "I am glad you came, Col. Conynghame. Tom here is getting quite dangerous. First he laughs at you, then he laughs with you, until you do not know whether you are yourself or some one else."

"And his sister is the sister of her brother, I assure you, Col. Conynghame. I was just imagining myself the hero of that Damoclean feast and fancying his feelings."

"Cousin Selma is studying out a little garden story, Miss Bowers, and she wishes your and your brother's opinion before she decides," said Conynghame, lifting his mental hat, with a smile to sister and brother, his faultless summer straw being already in his hand as he stood before Frank.

The story was made out and coincided with that of the sculptor. The count, having seen much garden decoration in France, helped decide the positions of the various mythological groupings; and at last, all satisfactorily arranged, the sculptor, who had engaged to supply missing noses, fingers, or arms, with a composition which would "so closely resemble the old marble that the most practised eye could not detect the breaks," proved his assertion by restoring then and there to a Cupid, from the models he had previously made, a lost arm.

"Very fine!" said the count critically.

"Be-e-autiful!" exclaimed Pella, ecstatically.

"Quite equal to. Praxiteles' famous Cupid, over which the world has gone so wild—although I must confess to not knowing whether I even saw it when I was in Rome, I saw so many things, or whether it is there now or not. It *was* carried there from Greece, I believe, and this Cupid is very possibly it," said Frank, demurely.

"We expect garden statuary to be good, as this is, the best of its kind, but we do not expect it to equal classical statuary," said the sculptor, good-humoredly. He spoke to Miss

de Grey, but showed by the smile that widened his mouth and twinkled in his eyes that he well understood the remark of the last young lady who spoke was aimed exclusively at the ecstatic young lady, and not at his work.

Leaving the sculptor overseeing his men, the party sought other parts of the grounds, and Selma, turning to speak to Breta, whom she supposed quite near, saw her wandering off with her brother toward the elms that shaded the natural fountain.

Other groups of two, Frank and Conyng-hame, Tom Bowers and Sadie, Pella and the count, all strolling over the grounds, were blending harmoniously with the beautiful shrubbery.

Selma, as she went on toward the house with Mr. Black on one side of her and Mr. Whyte on the other, rested her eyes with fond complacency on Breta's graceful form, with its pretty drooping shoulders, as Breta walked with such a firm, easy carriage beside her handsome brother.

"You ask me to give you some idea of my—the Rosicrucian—philosophy, Miss Garnet," said this handsome brother of Selma's, looking

down into Breta's thoughtful eyes. "One writer says: 'The subject of Alchemy was man.' Another writer (Eyrenaeus) says: '*Our gold* is not to be bought for money, though you should offer a crown or a kingdom for it, for it is the gift of God.'"

"Then their gold—the philosopher's stone—was not gold, the sordid metal, but—I see, Mr. de Grey," said Breta. "Uncle Ray was telling me something of it the other day."

"Hosts of self-seekers," continued de Grey, smiling at Breta's earnestness, "taking the symbolical language of the Hermetic writers literally (they were obliged to cover up their true meaning under symbols, as in those dark ages religious tolerance, or tolerance of any kind, was unknown) wasted years in trying to find a material agent that would transmute the baser metals into material gold. It was these charlatans who brought alchemy and the alchemists into such disrepute. In these days we can work for the truth (gold) openly, but we lack the self-denying workers that those Rosy-crossmen of the Middle Ages were, who suffered privation, persecution, and martyrdom to one end: the furtherance of science and the

emancipation of man from religious and political tyranny."

"It is well worth one's while to suffer and work for a great principle one's conscience accepts as a great truth," returned Breta. "And there is more of this done in the present day than the workers have credit for. It is all so humdrum—the present-day reform work,—and lacks, too, the poetry of antiquity and martyrdom to make it seem effective. I have often wished for an opportunity to make some great sacrifice and lose my life in it." And with a face softly flushed with generous enthusiasm, Breta looked up to de Grey, asking :

"But about your own particular theories, Mr. de Grey. How is this beautiful Hermetic philosophy to aid you in regard to the reputed—the occurrences at Elmwood, for instance?"

Looking down into the blue-gray eyes that were meeting his with such a charming look of inquiry, de Grey said :

"This subject is so little understood—although some of the profoundest scientists and thinkers of the age have more or less fully written on it—but that all who have inhabited this world will, some time in the cycles to come, in-

habit it again,—but I see dissent in your face, Miss Garnet.”

“Not dissent exactly—that is, I do not disbelieve, or believe. I wish to know more. Do you think those sounds in that house were caused by actual unseen presences?”

“Nothing of the kind, Miss Garnet; I look upon such phenomena,” and de Grey swept his hand over toward the house in question, “as indications of the existence of the spiritual side of our dual life. Some process not yet understood (telephonic perhaps) will elucidate these particular mysteries, now so vague, so misunderstood, so dependent on mere chimerical theories. The time will come when, through some scientific conception, the cause of those noises—I have never yet heard them—will be made clear.”

“I am delighted, Mr. de Grey, that this mysterious subject—I have never heard the noises either—is no clearer to you than it is to me. I see you are in doubt, as I am, and I stand in much less fear of you, and your philosophy now is much less awe-inspiring,” said Breta, with an upward look and smile.

“The Rosy-cross — magic—has universally

been the subject of awe ; so no wonder you were awed by me. But would you like to see my laboratory, Miss Garnet ? ”

“ Where you practise the Black art, Mr. de Grey ? ” said Breta, significantly.

“ We may as well call it by that name as by any other, for some of my chemical experiments blacken my hands so very black that,—but I can show you a number of interesting results at which I have arrived—some telephonic experiments among others.”

Breta speaking quite enthusiastically of her interest in all chemical experiments, de Grey suggested that they should go at once up into his laboratory.

On the way he explained certain chemical changes by catalysis, or contact-action, wherein the body inducing the change in another is itself unaltered. “ Quite as mysterious, Miss Garnet, as the Elmwood noises,” continued he, “ only scientists are well used to catalysis. We employ it in many curious experiments ; although the cause of its action, as I said, is as little understood as—”

“ As the mystery of our dual life perhaps,” suggested Breta.

As they entered the door, Selma, seeing them, rejoiced in her heart at the good understanding between them. She wished for nothing so much as that their evident mutual regard might progress to a happy conclusion.

In the evening they had some fine music, and Mr. Whyte playing a violin accompaniment to Breta's "*Vöglein, was singst im wald du so laut?*" left the listeners in doubt which was violin, which was voice, or which bird.

After singing, Breta was urging Tom Bowers to sing, saying his sister had told her he had a remarkable baritone.

"Oh, yes, Miss Garnet," assented Tom; "a real barrel-tone, a double-barrelled-tone, I assure you."

"Your Breta," said Mr. Black in a rumbling undertone to Selma, "would create a perfect furor if she were to appear in public again,—as she did at Milan. I never heard any thing like it; and her voice is even finer now, more matured. Such precision in alighting on tones—tones so well sustained,—and such a glottis-stroke! The marvel of it is how she has managed to keep up her enthusiasm and practice in this out-of-the-way place."

“*My* Breta, Benjamin, possesses the undeniable gift of song ; and love for the divine art has sustained her.”

Bowers, being excessively diffident, as he averred, upon Breta’s urging, could not be induced to sing alone. Selecting the exquisite four-voiced canon from Rossini’s *Möise*, he sang it with her, Frank, and de Grey. It was greatly applauded ; and Black asking for its repetition, and then again, the electrical vibration which thrills the ear from perfect accord was heard in its third rendering.

“ A thousand thanks, Miss Garnet,” exclaimed Black. “ Better and better. I could listen to *that* all night.”

“ Nine hundred and ninety-nine thanks will serve, Mr. Black,” returned Breta. “ But just think how tired we should be by morning.”

“ I always affirmed, Joslyn,” remarked Black, after duly acknowledging Breta’s repartee, “ that you have a tenor for purity of tone and compass that ’s a perfect marvel. There is no pleasure, after all, equal to hearing a masterpiece well rendered.”

Conynghame looked his enjoyment with his fine eyes, but said nothing, while the count

pronounced the music "charming," and Pella declared it was "be-e-autilful!"

Mr. Whyte and de Grey gave some sonatas of Mozart's with violin and cello, and ten o'clock coming, the young ladies were conveyed back to the school.

XV.

OPERAS WILL BE LOVELY.

SELMA found it easy on the resuscitation of Elmwood to engage permanently the servants she had employed from the village by the day while the place was in its ghost-inviting condition. And having conceived a project, that would make it perfectly delightful at Elmwood, she said, and would include the getting up some pleasant musical entertainments, she set to work in earnest, with Joslyn's and Ralph's assistance, to procure a large staff of well-trained servants from the city as a preparatory step.

"Breta has already promised me a long visit, this summer, and I shall prevail upon her friends also to come as soon as school closes. And," continued she, growing more enthusiastic, "I shall prevail on Mr. Bowers and—"

"Should we be so unfortunate, Selma, as to

have another war," observed Conynghame, "you would rise in this progressive age in no time ; that is, should you see fit to enlist. Such an able tactician as you have proved yourself is rare."

"Yes," assented de Grey, "you and I, Ralph, are only lookers on in Elmwood, during all these revolutions,—subject merely to orders. But Selma was always wonderful at planning, and always for the greatest good of the greatest number."

"Count me also as one of your aids, subject to orders, Miss de Grey," added Bowers ; "I likewise have always been too famous at doing the heavy looking on."

"With three such co-operators," said Selma, smiling, "what may we not achieve ? I am now going to Miss Rutherford's to invite Miss Bowers, Miss Burrill, and Miss Morton—Miss Garnet having already promised me—and would like the company of one of you gentlemen ; more than one would be entirely too formidable."

"We shall have to draw lots," suggested Bowers ; and the lot falling to Ralph, Tom said he was a lucky dog, and that he and de Grey

would have to console themselves with a game of billiards.

Selma and Conynghame found the young ladies just through "tea," and delighted with the unfolded plan.

"I am expecting my mother to be with us, Miss Rutherford; and our gentlemen friends have consented to spend more or less of the summer at Elmwood," added Selma, "and we intend having the great picture-gallery converted into an opera-house (at least so I call it) with stage and movable scenery. And when we are sufficiently well practised up in scenes from operas, we will have all our friends invited to listen to us; and we can make it both pleasant and instructive for all."

"I shall of course first write to mamma, Miss de Grey, but only for form's sake," said Frank, upon being appealed to, "for mamma not only gives me my own way, but insists on my taking it."

"I also possess a model mother of the same type, Miss Bowers," remarked Ralph.

"I have no one to ask," acknowledged Pella. "I was intending to spend the summer with my aunt, who always goes to Saratoga; but I am

excessively tired of Saratoga, and would greatly prefer Elmwood—with many thanks, Miss de Grey.”

Sadie Burrill's father (who was an extensive ship-owner, and was in Havre) had left her in the care of Miss Rutherford (Sadie having no mother), and Miss Rutherford signified her approval, being delighted that Miss de Grey had such a pleasant prospect in store for her. “The school closes on the 15th of July—close at hand—for the vacation. The young ladies will then be free, Miss de Grey,” said she.

“Do you know, Colonel Conynghame,” observed Frank, demurely, “I think it is very kind in Miss de Grey to burden herself with so many giddy girls.”

“Undoubtedly, Miss Bowers,” replied Ralph, with mischievous politeness, “but you will find Cousin Selma not only equal to the trying ordeal, but hugely enjoying it.”

“No one need be acquainted with Selma long to know that her greatest pleasure lies in self-sacrifice,” observed Breta, with a bright smile. “And the more trouble we give her the better she will like us and it.”

“The self-sacrifice manifested chiefly in being

able to listen unruffled to jocose adulations, Breta," returned Selma in her pleasant way, as she rose to go.

After she and Ralph had driven off there was a discussion out on the veranda among those invited. Breta had just been saying she recalled distinctly having seen Colonel Conyng-hame with Mr. de Grey at the opera, in Paris, over four years ago.

"Both faces once seen never to be forgotten," declared Frank. "But where was your not-to-be-forgotten face that they have not recalled—"

"I was sitting with Uncle Ray far back in a proscenium box, seeing but not seen, and they were in the orchestra seats. The opera was *Don Giovanni*."

"Life is full of such curious coincidences," remarked Sadie Burrill. "Papa met Frank's brother in Constantinople and became well acquainted with him. I wrote papa all about the picnic (I keep him regularly posted on all that passes), and I have just had a letter from him acknowledging Mr. Bowers' acquaintance. I shall now inform him of Miss de Grey's kind invitation. He writes me that he already

knows her from my description of her refined and—”

“Oh, you and your letters to your father,” snapped Pella. “He should get them published in thirteen volumes, that no one would ever read. *Of course* you descant largely on the perfections of this black-eyed Mr. Bowers, and it is so nice that they are already friends.”

“As you say, Pella,” returned Sadie, meeting her malicious pleasantry entirely undisturbed.

Frank laughed.

“Whatever any one else does, I shall go to Elmwood,” squealed Pella, with high-voiced decision, throwing a spiteful glance at Frank, “on the day school closes. And as for dresses, I have a trunk full of new ones, most of which are Worth’s, that brother Oscar has just sent me from Paris. But why Miss de Grey did not decide on charades and tableaux instead of—”

“Bother charades and tableaux!” broke in Frank. “They are as old as the hills. Operas will be lovely.”

“Oh, you expect to show your voice off. But I can’t sing loud, showy things; my voice

is too delicate in tone to be heard to advantage in juxtaposition with your really—if I must say it—blatant tones,” returned Pella.

“If you can’t sing, Pella, you can get up the tallest growl on the shortest notice of any one I know. A nice time Count Gueret will have when he gets you.”

“Count Gueret! A man old enough to be my father! You do not imagine, Frank, that Count Gueret will ever get me, as you elegantly express it,” and Miss Morton turned up her Greek nose quite high.

“My imagination is very vivid, Pella, and it makes me smole to see you after de Grey so—with a sharp stick—and know you won’t get him. I imagine also we shall have an awful jolly time at Elmwood this summer,” and Frank hummed *Tutto è gioja*.

“‘Smole’! ‘after de Grey’! ‘sharp stick’! ‘awful jolly’!” sneered Pella.

Breta laughed, and her mood becoming contagious, they all laughed in unison, and so heartily that Pella, joining in, quite thawed out, especially as Breta assured her that parts she could sing should be selected for her, as her voice was really very pretty and true.

The girls went to the class-rooms for their books to study their lessons, and Breta to prepare for an engagement to drive with de Grey. Frank, passing through the silent music-room, sang out in full voice : “ *Quis est homo qui non fieret Christi matrem si videret—*”

“ Miss Bowers, you improve daily,” said Miss Rutherford, as she entered the room. “ And if you could continue with Miss Garnet—”

“ I shall be with her all summer, Miss Rutherford, and as much longer as—well, I fully intend being with her always.”

Miss Rutherford, with a dignified smile, remarked that Miss de Grey’s guests would undoubtedly have a delightful summer, and that Mrs. de Grey being with her, would make it more decorous of course,—pleasanter for all.

That the practising for the operatic scenes might progress, and that Selma and her brother might have the multiplicity of counsel in which there is safety to help plan the little bijou of a stage, the four young ladies continued to spend their Saturdays and whatever other time they could get at Elmwood, the gentlemen all remaining to assist, as they averred.

The immense picture-gallery, in which the

miniature theatre, with its seats for five hundred raised in tiers and its pretty stage, was constructed, adjoined an oak-panelled dining-room that would accommodate tables for as many hundred persons, on such a grand scale had the mansion at Elmwood been built throughout. And when the carpenters were through their work, and the artist had painted and adjusted the shifting scenery, and the exquisite little drop-curtain was hung, and the chandeliers and foot-lights arranged, Black pronounced it as perfect a conception of the kind, well carried out, as he had ever seen.

"It is very charming," said the count. "Monseigneur the Marquis d'Alby has one very similar at his chateau, in which he has private theatricals enacted. I have assisted in them at various times."

"It is perfectly be-e-autiful," ejaculated Pella, endorsing both Selma's and d'Alby's private theatre.

"I hope Monseigneur the Marquis d'Alby enjoys his theatre as much as we shall ours, and with you to assist us, Count Gueret, necessarily must," rejoined Frank, in a half-mocking way, in French.

Breta, who had been placing some crimson camelias in Frank's dark hair, saw that the count took the saucy remark as complimentary, and that he was flattered by it.

"*Cela va sans dire*," said he, with his dry, bilious laugh, accompanied by a slight shrug of his shoulders and wave of his right hand.

XVI.

THREE KISSES.

IT was the afternoon before school closed. Bretta was in the music-room devoted to singing and considered as especially hers. She was overlooking Miss Rutherford's man-of-all-work pile music-books and loose music in a box.

"I was told I should find you here, my dear," said Mr. Whyte, entering the room.

"Yes, it is simply dreadful to have to own so much music when the time comes to go away," returned Bretta, who was down on her knees before the box, and she looked up at her uncle with a loving smile.

"Thank you, Edward, that pile is the last," continued she, rising and turning to the man in her gentle, graceful way.

"It was as much as ever, miss," said the man, shutting down the lid and turning the

key. "This trunk would not hold another note," and he fastened the straps. "Any thing more, Miss Garnet?"

"Nothing more, Edward, at present. Be sure and tell Katie that I shall see her before I leave."

"That man esteems it a great privilege to wait on you, my dear," said Mr. Whyte, seating himself as Edward bowed and withdrew.

"I called on his wife, Katie, several times when she was ill. I could not do much for her; but Edward has always made much of it. I am godmother to his little girl, you know, who is named for me."

"Yes, I remember," rejoined Mr. Whyte, with one of his twisted smiles. "My dear, I have something to say to you," added he.

"Yes, Uncle Ray."

"But perhaps you won't like it."

"I never disliked any thing you ever said to me yet," asserted Breta, laughing, as she stood beside her uncle, passing her fingers caressingly through his hair.

"Noel has been talking to me; he will be here within an hour to see you. It is about him I wish to speak, my dear."

"I cannot say I like the thought of talking about him, or of his coming to see me ; he has been the cause of much discomfort to me of late," said Breta, growing very serious and seating herself beside her uncle.

"My dear, I have seen it, as you say, of late especially. Of late his conversation to me is entirely about you. He is very much in earnest—though the word earnest scarcely applies to Noel. He is full, with all the *avoirdufois* he carries, of the expectation that he will eventually win you. He has not asked me in so many words to use my influence with you, he seems so confident of his own power over you."

"Yes, Uncle Ray ; please proceed."

"My dear, I have seen so much wedded misery—my favorite brother, for one, was a victim to it ; the serpent and the dove not being well mixed in his case—he having all the dove and she all the venom and cunning of the serpent ; and—she stung him to death."

"That was my Uncle George. I remember him well, and I remember her too. They took me to an exposition in Paris when I was eight years old, you may remember, and I was look-

ing with wondering admiration at some beautiful wax dolls, not for sale. She said two words, 'sour grapes,' but I shall never forget the *way* she said them."

"Nothing can be better than 'sour grapes' to point my moral," suggested Mr. White, with one of the most twisted of his twisted smiles. "You have only to keep so high up out of Noel's reach that he can never grasp you."

Breta looked up at her uncle with an intent, questioning glance, a vague smile crossing her face.

"You have a great deal of affection for Noel, my dear, have you not; he is so a part of your bright childhood days?"

"It is a question he himself asked me a short time ago, and I answered yes. But he well understood me."

"That you have no warmer feeling for him?"

"He has known that since that night in Milan when—he went to Paris to get you out of that vile prison."

"And you were in such a hurry to pay him back the twenty thousand piastres as soon as we returned to Milan. I had to laugh to see how determined you were that he should take

them ; not but that you were right, my dear, for you were quite right. Being indebted to Noel was harder to me than the *Clichy*—why, I cannot tell.”

“Perhaps you intuitively felt the indignity of the conditions,” said Breta, her face flushing at the recollection.

Little Mr. Whyte turned his fresh boyish face toward Breta, his open, candid eyes regarding her fixedly for a moment.

“That, my dear,—Noel’s total lack of that last fine sense or instinct that comes with the sympathetic organization, is the key-note of all I wish to say. He knows *you* are of the *simpat-ica* and builds on that. He loves you with an overmastering passion, the outgrowth of his overmastering passion for himself. He is clever, wonderfully clever, and withal good-humored, a *bonhomme*, and entirely unscrupulous where you are concerned. Knowing you to be tender-hearted he will stoop to work on your feelings, and make you believe he will die if he does not get you. But he won’t die. His love for himself will prevent his dying for any one ; a good tough fibre pervades him mentally as well as physically. But, lacking that

delicate perception of what belongs to others, he will utterly ignore the understanding you speak of—of your feelings toward him, and will, as I have said, coerce you to his views, if he can ; and in the end—but never mind the end ; that is *that* end. The only way to save yourself, Breta, will be to come to a final issue with him, painful as it will be for you. There, I have done !” And Mr. Whyte got up from his chair, walked over toward the window, and looked out on Miss Rutherford’s thrifty grape-vines.

Breta also rose, walked thoughtfully across the floor and back, and fetching up beside her uncle, she contemplated with him the massive clusters of grapes still green.

“Uncle Ray,” said she, brokenly, her eyes full of a deep, pathetic seriousness, “I know it—I have known it ; it is all true. It would be simply horrible ! But do not fear. He could never prevail on me—never. Self-sacrifice in *that* way—marrying without love, the most perfect love—would be to me an utter impossibility. I could give my life to save another life without a thought—”

“As I have intimated, my dear, you are essentially of the martyr stock.”

“Yes, Uncle Ray, you are right. I shall *have* to break with him at once. I have *so* dreaded it. I have *so* trusted to his sense of honor to consider our relations friendly only, that of cousins, that of sister and brother. Oh, he knows so well—”

Breta was interrupted by a sudden rushing sound, and Frank, with the impetuosity of a southern gust, burst into the room.

“Oh, I beg pardon!” exclaimed she, seeing Mr. Whyte. “I thought you were all alone, Breta.” And she was leaving the room as hurriedly as she had entered, when Mr. Whyte called to her :

“Stay, Miss Frank, it is I who am going,” and stooping to kiss his niece where she still stood by the window (he had only a couple of inches to stoop, his height being so little more than hers), he took his leave.

“Breta!” exclaimed Frank, “he—Noel Dunraven—is down in the drawing-room ; has just come He is paying his respects to Miss Rutherford ; that is his little game—always has been. Now mark my words, he has come (I scent it in the air as the ghost of Hamlet’s daddy did the dawn) to bring you to the

scratch. Now if you marry *him* it will *be* the scratch—the very old scratch—”

“Frank,” interrupted Breta, in all her perplexity laughing at Frank’s vehemence, “you are wild; you are at your worst, your very worst. Is it the full of the moon?”

“Never mind the moon,” returned Frank energetically; “the moon is gibbous, I am certain, and I’ve only a moment before you’ll be sent for. Now, listen: Noel Dunraven is as wily as a great, gigantic, æsthetic fox. He’s dead in love with you—as who is n’t? But you can’t marry them all; and you sha’n’t marry him. He will talk to you in Italian, like a Dutch uncle. He will poetically and æsthetically and pathetically bring up all your old Italian life, and then make you believe that he will drop dead at your feet if you don’t marry him. He will work on your sympathies until you will feel the only thing left to do is to make a holy martyr of yourself and marry a great, selfish, æsthetic baby that cries for the moon.”

“Frank, if you will only stop I will promise you never to marry any one.”

“But you must; you must marry—”

“Spare me now,” urged Breta, laughing, “and

I promise to marry any one you pick out. Will that suit you ? ”

“ There ! Here comes Miss Rutherford ; I hear her stately step,” exclaimed Frank. “ I will vacate the audience-chamber in favor of the latest comer,” added she as that lady entered the room. “ And, Breta, remember, if you do not keep the vow you just made me I shall haunt you,” and Frank threw her arms around Breta and kissed her fervently.

“ My dear Miss Garnet,” said Miss Rutherford as Frank hastened off, “ Mr. Dunraven is in the drawing-room and wishes to see you. He has asked me to intercede with you in his behalf.”

“ He has asked you to—” Breta added no more.

“ He is very much attached to you. I consider him an *uncommonly* fine young man. He is very talented—quite gifted, in fact. And he is remarkably fine-looking. Any woman might well be proud of him, as I have before said.”

“ He is all you say, Miss Rutherford, but he knows well I shall never marry him.”

“ Do not decide rashly, my dear Breta ; I may not be an able judge, but as I see him, he would

be in all respects a most desirable choice, and with all his other advantages of mind and person he possesses wealth."

"Yes, Noel has money."

"It will be a very bitter disappointment to him should you refuse him, my dear Miss Garnet, for he is very ardently attached to you. But go, my dear. It is a point for you to decide with him ; and may you be guided aright," and Miss Rutherford put her arm around Breta tenderly and kissed her on her smooth round cheek.

Taking her three kisses with her—her uncle's Frank's, and Miss Rutherford's—to fortify herself against the threatened attack, Breta sought the drawing-room, and found herself in Dunraven's presence.

She felt herself terribly at disadvantage with him during the first part of their interview ; he being cool and wary, saying only what he knew would interest and please her. He regarded her with a watchful look when he spoke or when she replied, and throughout their whole interview the watchful look never once left his eyes.

"You have treated me so coldly, so cruelly of late, Breta *mia*," at length said he, quite ab-

ruptly (it was always in Italian they spoke when together), that I asked Miss Rutherford to—I hope she represented to you what an uncommonly fine personage I am, take me all in all (she thinks so), and how devoted this fine personage is to you, *carissima*.” Although he spoke lightly and laughingly he weighed each word he said.

“It was scarcely necessary to bring a third person in, Noel.”

“You are right, *Breta mia*,” uttered he, wilfully misinterpreting her words. “We need only ourselves for a perfect understanding of the harmony between us, so precious to me, so—”

“Noel, this must come to an end,” said Breta, in a quiet voice, meeting his impassioned look with her calm eyes full upon him, while a little sigh escaped her. “You know my meaning. Do not force me to be more explicit. All this is very painful to me.”

“And have you considered my pain? Breta, I must speak, and you *must* hear me. The time has gone by for— Breta, I have always looked forward to the time when I could— Breta, you hold my life in your hands. In all these years

that I have loved you, and you alone, I have lived only in the hope, the certainty, that in the end you would be mine. I can wait no longer; my peace of mind has gone utterly. This suspense is killing me. I must have an answer now, at once, to my suit, and it must be yes."

Breta was silent for a moment, then, looking up into his face, her eyes cold and clear, she said in a steady voice, with something of contempt in its tone :

"As you say, the time has gone by for any more of this indecision. If we cannot be friends, simply, we must be nothing. For the sake of the years gone by when we were such good friends I have tried to love you—with what success you yourself know. That is my answer; I do not love you, I will never be your wife. And if you would leave me with any respect for you, you will let this drop forever thus." And Breta rose to leave the room.

Dunraven rose also, and taking one stride toward her, he grasped her wrist in his hand almost fiercely.

"Breta," exclaimed he, in a thick, choked voice, his eyes, as he looked into her face, dense with a smouldering fire, "I had rather see you

die in my arms the moment after I had led you to the altar, knowing you mine, my own, than see you live the wife of another man!"

Breta gave a start when he clutched her wrist, but made no effort to release herself from his grasp. She stood intently regarding him, every vestige of color having left her face.

"Speak! Breta, *carissima*, will you be mine? Come, my tragic muse, my *casta diva*, you have played me long enough; you have fairly landed me at your feet. Say the word that will make of me the happiest man living."

For reply Breta stood immovable, her eyes, full of an impenetrable light, still fastened upon his face, her face blanched to the hue of marble.

"So," said he, regarding her, "I have, it seems, reversed the fable of Pygmalion. I have turned *my* warm, living, breathing Galatea to cold, white stone."

"Good God! How deadly beautiful you are!" exclaimed he, releasing her arm, as if compelled to by the magnetic fixedness of her look.

Never for a moment taking her eyes from his face, Breta, freed from his grasp, partly turned and moved toward the door. But he

was there before her, and stood, his back against it, barring her egress.

“Not until you have answered my question, *bellissima*,” said he, in the lightest of his airy tones.

Breta stood silent and fixedly regarding him.

“Then, if you *won't* speak, if you *will* stand there like a divine statue, not until you have paid toll. Have you not one poor little kiss for your poor old friend who loves you so well?” And he made a movement as though about to take her in his arms, but he did not touch her. Then, changing his tone, he said: “I am going away, I am going to leave you, Breta, without even the benefit of a doubt to cheer me,” and he laughed, but it was a lame attempt at a laugh.

“Breta,” said he at last, “you freeze me; you turn me to stone with yourself; you are the Medusa—beautiful past all beauty—petrifying all who behold you. You—you wrench my heart—I can no more;” and raising his hand suddenly to his face, he bowed his head upon it, supporting himself against the door.

“You are greater than I, Breta—greater by miles,” and lifting his head as he spoke, he revealed his eyes suffused with tears. “You

have conquered and I submit." He spoke in a changed, broken voice, and staggering rather than walking to an arm-chair near, threw himself into it, burying his head in both hands.

Breta, her eyes still upon him, opened the door, and passing out shut it upon herself. Then speeding with swift steps, as though she had escaped from the jaws of some fierce denizen of the forest, she reached her chamber unseen, entered it, bolted herself within, and sank upon the floor devoid of all consciousness.

XVII.

“so!”

IT was full two hours before Breta came to herself. She arose to her feet, bathed her face, and arranged her hair; her watch telling her it was but five minutes to the hour she had promised de Grey to drive with him. She was putting on her hat, when the waiting-girl tapped at her door with de Grey's card.

“Oh,” exclaimed the girl, “you look puffedly ghastly! Sha'n't I get you something, Miss Breta? And here Mr. de Grey has come in his lovely two-horse phaeton.”

“Nothing, Katy; it will all pass off. Has—Mr. Dunraven gone?”

“Long ago, Miss Breta. And he looked sublime as he rode off. Miss Rutherford and he had a long talk just before he went. But you have n't had a mite of supper; they're at tea now.”

Asking the girl to bring her a glass of iced-water only, at the front door, Breta took the wrap she handed her, and went down.

As de Grey helped her into the phaeton, her blanched face and the strained look of calmness in her eyes gave him a great shock ; but he made no remark concerning her appearance, and seeing the color gradually return to her face, and the pained look in her eyes give way to one of perfect content after they had driven on some distance, he became less anxious, and devoured her smiles as though each one was a priceless treasure to him. And, although their conversation was desultory and inconsequent, nothing that Breta could have recalled, it was, nevertheless, very precious and restful to her.

They had arrived to where an abrupt descent at the right of the road revealed the broad expanse of valley bounded by the blending of the horizon with the far-distant mountains, that could be seen from the elm-shaded knoll at Elmwood as well.

" Let us pause here for a little," urged Breta. " This spot is so deliciously cool and shady ; and one never wearies of that view. Do you know,

Mr. de Grey, that to look across that seventy miles of enchanted valley to those misty mountains beyond, always makes me feel as though I was penetrating through the away-back heart of some human being—though I am afraid I am not an adept at reading character.”

“Ulysses is, Miss Garnet ; you can always rely on his judgments.”

Ulysses, when the phaeton stopped, had come around to Breta's side, and planting his fore-paws on the floor of the phaeton, was contentedly resting his broad muzzle on her lap and looking up into her face.

Just then a crunching of twigs was heard, and ascending the steep path from below came a man on horseback, who proved to be no other than Dunraven

He had evidently not seen the occupants of the phaeton until he came upon them. But nothing taken aback, he bowed to Breta and de Grey, and dismounted, Ulysses greeting him with a low, ugly growl. Calling the dog to his side, de Grey was occupied in silencing him, while Dunraven, his hat in the hand with which lightly and easily he led his horse, approached Breta, and offered her a bunch of

exquisite wild flowers and brake he bore in his disengaged hand.

“ I gathered these, *cugina mia*,” said he, in Italian, “ expressly for you, and intended leaving them for you at Miss Rutherford’s. But you must have them now in all their freshness and beauty. I start for Liverpool to-morrow morning, and am glad of this opportunity to say farewell.” And holding out his hand he took hers and carried it to his lips in a jaunty, cousinly way.

“ We part good friends,” said he, impressively, “ as we have always been ; *addio*.” And remounting his horse as lightly and gracefully as he had dismounted, he rode off with a low bow and a smile that showed all his white, strong teeth.

Breta, who had grown as white as her dress, was absently pulling the pretty petals from the flowers she loosely held, and scattering them broadcast.

“ Oh, spare the flowers, Miss Garnet. They are very beautiful and rare, and entirely harmless.”

Meeting de Grey’s look as he uttered his plea for the flowers, Breta, inexpressibly

soothed by the quiet tenderness of his manner, rallied, saying with unaffected simplicity :

“ We were speaking of reading character, Mr. de Grey. I find I must accept Ulysses’ judgment of my cous—of Mr. Dunraven. As he revealed himself to me in the early part of this afternoon, I could think of likening him only to a—to a—well, to a tiger—strong, sleek, graceful, wary, and—” But the concluding adjective Breta left unspoken.

“ We all resemble some one or more among the four-footed animals,” replied de Grey, still very quietly.

“ I think, Mr. de Grey, you must be somewhat like Ulysses here (Ulysses had resumed his former position with his head resting on Breta’s lap) ; your eyes—his and yours—are exactly alike,” said Breta, with a laugh.

“ And you, Miss Garnet, I have often thought, are like a deer—always a *dear*,—retreating from disagreeable things shyly and persistently—always when you can—until brought to bay. I can imagine how desperately brave and cool you might be when fairly brought to bay.”

“ You would have had an opportunity of

testing your theory this afternoon, for my cousin and I had a quarrel.”

“ So I judged,” returned de Grey. “ Miss Garnet,” continued he, regarding her fixedly, while his tone was very gentle, “ is it a part of your creed that reparation should be made for serious injuries ? ”

“ What a strange question, Mr. de Grey.”

“ Do you not feel self-accused, Miss Garnet? That was a terrible blow you gave me on that first Sunday we met in church. I shall never recover from it.”

His voice, in spite of the lightness of his words, had a repressed passion in its tone that stirred Breta to her heart’s core ; and half inclined to laugh at the allusion to the scene of that Sunday, half inclined to cry with the conflict of her feelings, she remained silent.

“ You bore it bravely,” continued he. “ My heart ached for you, and every note of ‘ I know that my Redeemer ’ registered itself there never to be effaced. Miss Garnet, I—Breta, my love was—was *bumped* into me. I have seen stars—a star ever since.”

Breta could stand no more. The strange depths of his tone—the quietness of his man-

ner, shook her until she trembled like a leaf. She first laughed nervously, and then her eyes filled with tears. And somehow Ulysses was swept from his perch and de Grey had gathered her into his arms. And the words he uttered quieted her, and she gave her future into his keeping, the lovely valley smiling peacefully before them, and Ulysses, now lying in the road, his great head resting on his forepaws, looking a contented assent.

"Breta, darling, will you enlighten me on a point that has perplexed me much?" asked de Grey, after several moments of silence, looking earnestly down into her face.

Breta met his look askingly, but made no other reply.

"Why, while you could not help listening to the voice of your heart, have you struggled so hard against it and me? For you have; you were irresistibly drawn to me; that I saw from the first. You were happy only when with me; that I felt, and still I feared you would get away from me before I could grasp you—to have and to hold—thus. Now why was it?"

"That is the question I thought was coming," returned Breta, laughing, but rather uneasily.

" Well ? "

" You cannot divine why ? "

" On my soul, no. I have worked over that problem, Breta, as hard as ever I did over the hyperbolic logarithms of Napier, or the differential calculus."

" You have asked me and I will answer you. But it will be a hard thing for me to do, and I doubt if it will show me in an amenable, amiable light. I answered your question, in fact, that Saturday on the knoll at Elmwood ; and Uncle Ray's explanation to you as to why I left Milan and the opera you can recall also. I could get along, you see, very comfortably with all those I met in Milan, or here, or in New York—or anywhere, until they commenced showing me a particular preference and—asked me to marry them. And then I hated them—or myself, I could not say which. What right had they to presume that I—well, they seemed to me like a pack of ravening wolves, they were so—so foreign to me and my ways of thought and feeling. When I became acquainted with you it was—you were a new revelation to me. I felt at once that I had met my other self. But I would not give way to this conviction,

fearing that you might possibly—and then that I might hate you also, you see. But it is all over now. I shall never have another doubt or fear of—of you in—in that way.”

Breta's broken sentences, uttered in a tremulous voice, though apparently neither very lucid nor logical, seemed to de Grey both, and to convey also a very subtle meaning. He did not permit himself to respond at once, but quietly took up the neglected lines, backed the horses from the maples by the roadside, where he had headed them to keep them from becoming restive, and giving them the road, drove on a few rods before a word was said.

“You are so different from others; so true to yourself; that is what I so love in you, Breta,” said he, gently. “You should have been shielded from all this, and hereafter you shall—will be.” Then his tone changing to a lighter one, he added.

“The general impression is, I believe, that young ladies are pleased with attentions and offers of marriage; keeping them for exhibition, as a brave does his scalps—so many trophies of their prowess.”

Breta laughed, then grew quite serious.

“ I have had very few friendships with young ladies,” she responded. “ Frank is the only one I have ever been at all intimate with—I told you I was not an amiable person,” and she laughed again. “ I can only say that if we would all follow the promptings of our hearts instead of our vanity there would be less misery, fewer unhappy marriages in the world.”

“ You have solved what I consider the greatest problem of life,” gravely uttered de Grey. Then after a moment’s silence he asked : “ But, Breta, darling, what will your uncle say to my having stolen his treasure, when I formally ask him for your hand ? ”

Breta looked up shyly, and then her eyes grew moist with tears.

“ I am horribly nervous to-day,” apologized she, with a little laugh. “ You must pardon me, Mr. de—Joslyn,—I like your name so much, I have long wanted an excuse to call you by it.”

“ It was my father’s name, and his father’s, and so on back ; there has always been a Joslyn de Grey,” returned he, quietly.

“ You spoke of my uncle. Uncle Ray is one in ten thousand. I can never leave him, Joslyn.”

"I esteem him beyond measure—for himself, his music, still more on your account. Is that a sufficient reply, Breta?"

"Every one must love him and his violin. He never had an enemy in the world; not even among those jealous, envious, high-strung, always antagonistic *maestri* there in Milan and Venice and Paris."

They were on their way home again, and were at the point where Dunraven had encountered them, and Breta, feeling less shy and quite as though she and de Grey had been on their present footing for months, had been talking freely, and now once more, of the view spread before them.

"You can get a still finer sight of the valley and its surroundings from that pile of rocks way up above us there," remarked de Grey.

"Yes, I have seen it several times; I have been up there with Uncle Ray."

"You! you have been up there, Breta?"

"Yes, I! I have been up there, Joslyn."

"There is but one way of getting there, and it is steep and jagged enough," and de Grey surveyed the almost perpendicular height.

"We—Uncle Ray and I—have climbed more

stupendous heights than this, searching for plants and views. There is a ledge just around that bend, where, up among the fissures of the rocks, are some of the loveliest ferns I ever saw; and we have surprised the night-hawks on their rocky nests up there, blinking in the sunshine, and have counted their eggs and little ones.”

“ I was right in my conjecture, I perceive. You are decidedly of the cervus tribe, to delight so in a promenade among such formidable steeps. We will try the ascent together some day. I should like to see how you do it.”

“ Agreed, if you will stop laughing at me.”

When Selma saw them enter the house (for de Grey had prevailed upon Breta to return to Elmwood with him, promising to get her back to the school by ten o'clock) both looking so bright and so full of the new joy born to them, a well-pleased look came into her own eyes, and she remarked to Mr. Black, who was just about to mount his horse :

“ My last fear for Joslyn's future is dissipated. I could not have picked out a wife for him more, in every way, suitable. Breta is one of the most harmoniously organized persons I ever met. She is a true child of genius, and withal pos-

sesses a fund of good, practical sense. She will wean him entirely from his impractical theories."

"So!" uttered Mr. Black, stopping a moment, with his foot in the stirrup, to consider the case, as though it were a legal one. "When did Joslyn tell you?"

"Joslyn told me, Benjamin, without telling me. I saw them as they came into the house together."

"Selma, I will appoint you my head detective when—when the time comes." And Benjamin rode off.

XVIII.

UNDER ONE ROOF.

WHAT Mr. Whyte said was :
“ My dear, I am delighted that you should have made such a choice. I consider Joslyn de Grey the most genuine, the finest young man I ever knew. He is the real thing, way down deep—and without any fuss or feathers. I feared so much it might, after all, be Noel. And yet I knew better—that you saw him as he is. That it is too much of the *post mortem* with him.”

Breta regarded her uncle with a little puzzled look, repeating : “ *Post mortem*, Uncle Ray ? ”

“ It is all very well to unearth Herculaneum and the buried cities of the past ; but to be told how we should feel in viewing these antiquities, and how we should stand in the face of defunct grandeur and classic art, is proof sufficient the admiration is not genuine.”

"Then you consider Noel superficial, Uncle Ray? You never said that before."

"My dear, Joslyn is not. Suppose two persons are contemplating a divine work of art, say the Mona Lisa. One of these persons will see and comprehend the beautiful soul which gives vitality to these exquisite features, while the other will see only the surface beauty and worship it because it is so faultless in line and color, and because a certain order to which he belongs—but I have said enough."

This was the next day, the 15th of July, and Mr. Whyte was conveying his niece to Elmwood, Miss Rutherford having parted from her pupils for the vacation, and with five or six of them, including Frank, Sadie, and Pella, "for good," as Frank said.

Soon after Mr. Whyte drove up with Breta, Selma's coachman stopped at the great hall-door with the carriage containing the three young ladies just named, and Selma busied herself in showing them all to their respective rooms.

Their rooms opened from the same corridor, and adjoined each other; and Frank declared that she should never sleep a wink for fear of

the ghosts, and she selected the room opening into Sadie Burrill's on one side and into Breta's on the other.

"Sandwiched in between you two, and your doors into my room both open, I shall be able to survive," averred she, with a series of shudders.

"Miss de Grey, don't you believe her. It is all put on. Frank is not one whit more afraid than I am," and in an unusually pleasant humor Pella laughed heartily, selecting the room in preference that had no communicating door, to prove her own superiority; she being "above all childish fears," she declared.

"The gentlemen have been in the city for a few days. Joslyn went this morning for mamma, but I expect them all back here this afternoon," said Selma, as she left them to arrange their drawers and presses.

Frank, after unlocking her trunks and hanging up a gown or two, ran into Breta's room and stationed herself at the window.

"Did you know, Breta, Miss de Grey has given us that handy little Angelique to wait on us, and she has a new maid for herself. I never had any thing to do with clothes at home, except to wear them, and have drudged at Miss

Rutherford's as long as I care to in the vain endeavor of acquiring habits of 'neatness, industry, and order.' " Here Frank imitated Miss Rutherford's voice and manner, and having succeeded in making Breta laugh and drop a pile of laces she had in her hand, Frank urged :

"Leave all your things just where they are, as I have. Angelique will fix them. She will be here as soon as Pella gets through *mole-ing* among her French dresses."

"My arrangements are comparatively simple and nearly completed. I could not be tortured with such a scientific complication of wardrobe as Pella has. You know I acquired the habits of 'neatness, industry, and order' you speak of from my *Madama* the Contessa Romano, years ago in Milan."

"And you are always more tastefully dressed than any of us. But, *voild!* come over to the window ; here trots up Counsellor Black on his eternal black horse. He *is* a fine-looking man—of the giant pattern. How old do you think he is? "

"Selma told me—thirty-seven."

"And he is already one of our greatest lawyers—and such a quantity of him! "

"And here comes some one else, and in such an elegant turn-out—his own, undoubtedly, for I have seen nothing like it around here. The plot begins to thicken, Frank."

"I declare, Breta, Ralph Conynghame *is* magnificent; just like this new turn-out of his—at once elegant and stylish, without being showy. I have a secret to tell you, Breta. I intend to marry Ralph Conynghame."

"So I have thought from the first, Frank. He will make you a good, noble husband, for he is a gentleman—a gentleman all through."

"Is he not, Breta?" That is what first attracted me toward him. To be sure he has not asked me yet, but that is a small obstacle; the thing was for me to make up my mind. I think he would have been over head and ears in love with you at first, as every one is, but that I would not allow."

"Frank, you really shock me."

"Oh, yes, I know I am very shocking; I always was; mamma and every one says so. But I am in solid earnest; I mean biz. I was not going to let Ralph Conynghame fall in love with you, for I meant you for quite another person. And in trolling him off away from you I

began to take so much interest in him myself that I determined to appropriate him."

"Frank, you are getting worse every day. And you are so nice when you are good," suggested Breta.

"I always was. Mamma and every one says so."

"As though you had to manœuvre, when from the first Col. Conynghame was— Frank, you know well enough that, if I must say it, he is deeply in love with you."

"It is perfectly lovely to hear you say it, Breta."

"And he is sincere ; in all respects a man of honor, talented, and genuine."

"And I—I am not in all respects all those fine things I pity him deeply, and hope he will never regret marrying such a harem-scarem, slangy rantam-scoot as I."

"You are certainly powerful on adjectives, Frank," said Breta, laughing. "But if you will look less like a thing uncanny, and listen, I will tell you something that will delight you to hear."

"Something I already know, Breta. You told it to me last night, on your return from

Elmwood. I don't mean that you told me in words—you need n't look so out and injured;—your face told me. And if two people were ever cut out for each other, those two are you and Joslyn de Grey." And Frank threw her arms around Breta and kissed her.

"I shall begin to believe you really are what I have often called you—an *incantatrice*."

"Mamma and every one—but here comes some one else in his two-horse phaeton. The plot does begin to thicken. Ha! and now this some one else, who proves to be the young master of Elmwood, looks up to this window, sees you, smiles, and bows. What a lustrous, happy light is in his eyes! I bow to him also, not that I think he sees *me* in the least, but to keep you company. And now he helps out of the phaeton that lovely middle-aged lady—his mamma, of course, who is the image of him, and does not look like Selma—not but that Selma is lovely, too, of another type. Ah! *mon amie*, you have a beautiful life before you. I only hope *my* future mamma-in-law is one half as lovely as this lady whom Selma has rushed out to welcome so warmly. What a pretty picture the three make. And now they go up

the steps of the veranda and into the house. And—*voilà, qui devient intéressant !* ” rattled on Frank. “ It is brother Tom now coming up the drive ; and in a spick and span new turn-out. It is a most gorgeous affair, but does not compare with Col. Conynghame’s, for Tom’s *looks* new.”

Sadie Burrill just then entering through Frank’s room joined them, and catching a glimpse through the window of Tom Bowers as he leaped from the vehicle in his careless, dashing way, she blushed most eloquently.

“ Let us go down. Have we gotten on all our war-paint ? ” demanded Frank. “ Sadie, you look perfectly stunnin’. Breta, in that shadowy muslin gown you look just like an angel in a fleecy cloud ; now do, some one, say something fine about me.” And Frank commenced inspecting herself in the double mirror.

“ Frank, you are transcendent ! ” exclaimed Sadie, with her gay, girlish laugh.

“ If you would behave one half as well as you look, Frank, you would take the world by storm,” added Breta, laughing, and looking lovingly at Frank.

A knock came at the door, and Angelique

entered with a deliciously fragrant basket of flowers. She made them up into exquisite bouquets, and arranged others, she had selected, in the young ladies' hair with artistic skill. And going to Frank's trays and boxes she effected some brilliant changes in her toilette.

"I could not come sooner, young ladies," she said in her half French and half English. "Miss Morton kept me. But to-morrow Fanchon, Miss Morton's own maid, comes, and I shall devote myself exclusively to you."

Making some changes in Sadie's dress, Angelique surveyed Breta from near and far, and pronounced her perfect, "*tres jolie*." "You needed only the flowers, Miss Garnet," she added.

Telling them they were the three most beautiful young ladies she had ever seen, and handing them their bouquets, Angelique opened the door and ushered them to the stairs.

"It is so nice to have it all done for you ; to have your war-paint selected and put on without the labor of thinking about it yourself," observed Frank, on their way down to the drawing-room.

XIX.

ALL WITHIN OURSELVES.

EVERY one in the house was full of the opera, for it had been decided to rehearse an entire opera, and much discussion ensued. Various operas were suggested by first one and then another, and rejected.

"Every opera named so far has a ghost in it," exclaimed Frank, with a stage shiver. "The ghosts of the house would be sure to respond, and it would be nip and tuck who could get up the best demon."

"Did you ever hear a young lady use such an expression as that, Count Gueret,—‘nip and tuck’?" sneered Pella to the count, who was examining some views of the Tuileries with her over at a table.

"The Semiramide has not been named," intimated Breta. "There is the—same objection to it; but Ninus is an intensely respectable shade and—"

"Sister Frank," interrupted Bowers, "how would you like to slay your own mother? Think of the dismal scene in the mausoleum of the murdered Ninus. Miss Garnet, consider Frank's nerves, and suggest something less awe-inspiring than the Semiramide."

"Brother Tom, living or dead, with nerves or without nerves, whatever other horrible thing you do, don't say Semiramide. The Italian language, bear in mind, unlike the English, or French, or—or Chinese, has no appreciable accent. Then, too, the *a* is *ah*, the *e* is *a*, and the *i* is *e*."

"Say-mee-rah-mee-day, will that please your Italian ear? Unfortunately, *I* have not studied Hebrew and Chaldaic and Burmese and Choc-taw and—Chinese, recollect, as you have. And *I* am not afraid of ghosts."

"The last time I heard the *Semiramide*," observed Conynghame, in his clear, gentlemanly tones, after the laugh evoked by Bowers had subsided, "was in Berlin; you were with me, Joslyn, and Patti, with her exquisitely-accurate glottis-stroke, was prima donna. The whole cast was fine."

Here Count Gueret spoke up from the in-

terior of the Tuileries, suggesting several French operas ; but as they did not meet with an enthusiastic acceptance, he went back to the Tuileries.

"Suppose we return to our first intention, and select some fine scenes from various operas," suggested Selma;

"With tableaux between scenes," proposed Breta, with a view to Pella's benefit, whose Greek face had elongated considerably during the operatic discussion.

Pella, at once all animation, spoke up, sweetly, in high treble, of some "lovely designs for tableaux" her brother had sent her from Paris.

"No one has heard Miss Burrill's opinion," said Mr. Black, gallantly requesting to know her preference also.

Sadie, her delicately pretty face, with its square, intelligent forehead and spirituelle features, all aglow under the modest excitement of pronouncing an opinion before so many, said she would be delighted to assist in the choruses of the operatic selections, or in the tableaux, and that Miss de Grey must dispose of her where she could be made most available.

"The blessed little darling!" exclaimed Tom in an undertone to Frank. "She is frightened half out of her wits, but she is clear grit."

"We will have the quintette from the *Semiramide*, for one thing," pronounced Selma. "Ralph, you to take one of the basso parts, and Mr. Bowers the other."

"I was terribly afraid, Miss de Grey," acquiesced Tom, bowing, "that we might finally fetch up on Wagner's *Trilogy*; that has a trill in it thirty-six hours long, and that takes fifteen days and nights without eating or sleeping to enact (the *Trilogy* I mean, not the trill), and that we would have to impress the Atlantic Ocean, and mermaids, and sirens, and a whole artillery of cannon. And, perhaps, Wagner himself, with his doubled and quadrupled heavy brass instruments—that in doubling always produce diabolical discords—and his drums so large and heavy that their stroke can only be heard ten bars after their time in the measure. Or at the very least that we might settle on the Gott-er-dam-er-ung part;—excuse me, ladies, for being profane, but it *is* the name, you know. For any thing less heavy and long, you may depend on me, Miss de Grey. I might fall asleep on

the night of the fourteenth day, and that would put out the rest."

"Tom, Tom," laughingly exclaimed Frank, "shocking as they say I am, you are worse. Remember, if we should all get suddenly hoarse on the day of the entertainment and not be able to sing, you are to deliver a lecture on music. *Et qu' en dites vous*, Miss de Grey? Would it not be a sufficient immunity for the audience?"

"Quite sufficient," assented Selma, laughing.

Just then a visitor was announced by Bolton, the footman; and a tall gentleman, with piercing black eyes and heavy black beard and hair mixed with gray, entered the room, and Breta, hastening toward him, exclaimed: "*mio caro padre!*" and was lost in his arms, the tall gentleman concluding his stage embrace by kissing her hand. Little Mr. Whyte also going forward to welcome him, was received by him with effusion in a truly foreign embrace. Breta then leading him to Mrs. de Grey, who, in an arm-chair over by one of the windows, had been engaged in conversation with Mr. Whyte, and at times a much-amused spectator of the oper-

atic discussion, was now presented to the Signor Trapassi, "my well-beloved *maestro*," added Breta.

"To take me so by surprise!" exclaimed Breta, as Selma joined them and was introduced to the *maestro*.

"All owing, *figlia mia*, to these two ladies from whom I received my invitation to come here," returned the professore, laughing with a malicious enjoyment of Breta's surprise.

"I so much feared that Professor Trapassi might not be able to come, that I kept silent on the subject, and enjoined on mamma to do the same," said Selma, beaming on Breta delightedly.

"And I—I have long wished to come to the country that contains my well-beloved pupil," returned the *maestro*, in his imperfect English; "the country of the martyred Signor Leencolen, whom I revere with my own Garibaldi. So I determined on taking a holiday, and, *grazie a Dio*, here I am! I arrived in Nuovo York to day."

Being presented generally, the conversation turned upon ocean trips, the *maestro* narrating, with much gusto, several amusing incidents of

his. And from ocean trips, arriving at Niagara, he declared that one inducement for coming to America, besides hearing his divine *diva* sing once more—for which he would have braved a dozen tempestuous oceans,—was to see the great Falls of Niagara, the vast Western prairies, and the forests of California. When, finally, the intended musical *festa* was discussed, he entered into the spirit of it like a boy—or a great *maestro* on a holiday.

He took in hand the various voices as though they were subjects for dissection; admiring or criticising without fear or favor,—and in a twinkling, made out the three hours' programme, leaving spaces between *scena* or solo for the tableaux.

He was very sorry, he declared, that Signor de Grey was not a poor man; money being, as he averred, a terrible evil. Declaring he should be so delighted to engage him and bring him out as *primo uomo*, and that he would insure for him both fame and fortune.

"Brother Joslyn and my cousin Ralph (your basso here, Signor Professore) studied six or seven years while abroad," said Selma. "They ought to sing well."

"They ought to, Selma, and *one* does," returned Conynghame. "Our first *maestro*, poor old Ronaldi, while he listened to Joslyn with delight, used to rave so distractedly at the unpliant tones of my voice that I own I felt somewhat self-accused when he died."

"No one but cousin Ralph himself doubts the excellence of his singing," averred Selma.

"I hope, Professor Trapassi," said Bowers, "that as we are to have the quintette in the Say-me-rah-me-day (here Tom looked quizzically at his sister), you will adjudge the part of Assur to Conynghame, and let me take that of the prophet Oroe. I could never achieve that run of Assur's." And Bowers whistled it :



"I should be sure to break down and burst a note on that high E," he added.

"So I had previously adjudged," the professor replied, with a comprehensive smile and a good-humored flash, vivid as lightning, from the depths of his keen black eyes.

"Selma, where shall I find a score of the

opera?" asked Conynghame. "I am not as familiar with the part as Bowers is."

"In the library, Ralph, on the shelf near the western bay-window, which contains nearly all the operas that have been written," returned Selma.

"Just around the corner, Conynghame, No. 520; with a green door and brass knocker; in front of a blue pump; a lamp-post to the left, and a baker's shop opposite. You will be sure to find it."

"Tom, be careful," warned Frank. "Everyone won't understand, as I do, that you don't mean any thing by your—"

"But I do mean something, Sis,—to guide Conynghame in his search, and see, here he comes with the book in consequence. He never would have found it without."

There was something so fresh and spontaneous in Bowers' up-bubbling drollery, as though he were boiling over with fun; his accompanying facial changes and his whimsical gestures, always more irresistible than his words, that no one thought of resisting the laughter he provoked, and Conynghame, so quietly polished, taking to him greatly, extremes met and the liking seemed to be mutual.

The professore laughed with the rest, declaring him to be a great *buffo*, and that in picking out for him, as he had, Figaro's solo (putting his finger on the programme), he expected him to create a great sensation, with his full, deep bari tone, almost basso voice.

"We will leave off in the quintette here," added the professore, who had the score of the *Semiramide* in his hand, "at *nel mio terror*."

"Where we all die off in a *smorz*, is it not?" asked Bowers, suiting the action to the word.

"Just before the *Dun Semidio*," continued the professore with a great smile. "And we will conclude with the duo *Giorno d'oro* instead of *Dun Semidio*, and that will give Miss Bowers' contralto fine scope. I should like to hear it sung at La Scala by you two signorini; Miss Bowers' contralto is much finer than that of the Signora Gabussi who sang with you that winter you sang at the Scala, *figlia mia*." The latter part of his sentence he addressed to Bréta in his own tongue, and finding all understood him, notwithstanding Bowers had averred he had not studied Italian, the *maestro* now spoke on in his own language, being able to express himself he declared, so much more easily.

"Tom is a humbug. He knows Italian as well as I do," said Frank.

"Il Signor Bowers is a born *buffo*," returned the professore, with another great smile.

"Our chorus, Signor Trapassi, consists of Miss Morton and Miss Burrill, soprani ; myself, contralto ; Count Gueret, tenore, and Mr. Black, basso. I hope you will find us efficient."

"I am afraid Signor Trapassi will repent enlisting me, I howl so unmercifully," said Mr. Black with a gallant attempt at Bowers' facetiousness, "I fear I shall drown out all the rest."

"Oh, do not fear, *Signor Consiglière*," returned the *maestro*, still in Italian, "you have a very full, noble basso. It will be very effective in chorus."

"You sing remarkably well, Benjamin, when you do not get too enthusiastic," added Selma gently.

"As you please, Selma, I am always subject to the commands of the ladies," acquiesced Mr. Black subsiding into his legal manner.

"Counsellor Black may consider himself as the ponderous representative of the Great Snubbed ; but snubbed so neatly he feels himself complimented rather. He should stick to

urbane dignity and leave tomfoolery to Tom Bowers," said Frank in a low tone to Bowers.

"And to Tom Bowers' sister," retorted Tom.

"Listen," said Sadie, laughing, who was beside them, "Signor Trapassi is asking about our orchestra."

They crossed the room in time to hear Selma explain to the *maestro* that she was daily expecting two young cousins who had been studying for the last ten years abroad, one an excelling pianist, the other a flutist and violinist. "Both thorough musicians I assure you, signore," continued Selma. "Then we have Mr. Whyte's violin, and you know, signore, what that is, and in the solos brother Joslyn's cello, and last but not least mamma's harp. Mamma is a wonderful harpist I assure you, and so used to playing she never tires. If you think we need more pieces, Signor Trapassi, we can easily engage them from New York, though we did wish to have it all within ourselves."

Mrs. de Grey came forward from her chair over by the window, whither she had retired, to say she was very sure the *maestro* would find the orchestra sufficient, all being such competent musicians.

"I quite prefer a small orchestra of sympathetic musicians of culture to one composed of very many ordinary musicians. The Signor Whyte's violin is almost an orchestra in itself," returned the *maestro*.

Mrs. de Grey, Selma, and the *maestro* continued talking for a time, and then he afterwards found himself wandering over the grounds with Breta and reviewing old Milan times.

They were sitting on one of the carved oaken benches at the knoll, the *maestro* contemplating the majestic view, when Mr. Whyte and de Grey joined them. And it was not long before Mr. Whyte, getting into a musical discussion with the *maestro*, carried him off to his den to play for him some of the scores about which they had been discussing.

It was in such hours as the one that followed that Breta lived a whole lifetime of content. And de Grey watching for them, employed the greatest ingenuity in securing these delightful moments as precious to him as to her. It was not until the gong sounded loudly for dinner, that they made their way to the house and joined the rest.

XX.

THE TWO-BY-TWO ARRANGEMENT.

THE rehearsals went on with great spirit and industry ; the two young Thornes having arrived and proving themselves musicians of no common merit. Fred, the pianist, had a touch as soft as velvet, and his runs were so many strings of pearls ; while Carl's violin and flute being also greatly commended, Selma was highly gratified.

The count, meantime, being well up in his chorus parts, having sung them, as he declared, at the Marquis d' Alby's, had but little to do ; and as Satan is said to kindly provide occupation for such, he suddenly conceived the idea that it would be prudent to ascertain the exact amount in hard cash owned by the young heiress to whom he had been paying such assiduous court, and not rely solely on appearances.

He announced one morning after breakfast that he should be obliged to tear himself away from the charming company assembled, for a day or two on business.

"Why, Gueret," said Mr. Black, "I thought you of all men had no business cares. While I—and, by the way, I must show myself in court this morning, and will run down to the city with you, after I have rehearsed my parts in the choruses."

"I shall be delighted, Black; the choruses all coming first to-day at my request," returned the count, smiling through his moustache.

The count was gone but two days; the result of his investigations proving so entirely satisfactory, that, paying to the jobber-in-law (Black not having been let into the secret) a certain sum for assisting him in his search into the extent of the Morton property, he at once purchased a baronial-looking buggy, on the panel of which he had hastily painted a sarcorampus surrounded by hieroglyphics—his coat of arms.

The artist, who so hastily painted the sarcorampus, had given the head of the bird a knowing tilt to one side, much as if it were a

human vulture. And without sensing the possible application of this representation of family emblazonry to his own individual case, he had the vehicle conveyed to the village of Lea in the cars, which also carried him. And there having the handsome horse he had purchased harnessed to it (although feeling the outlay with his limited income inconvenient), he drove with a brave heart to Elmwood.

The mornings were now devoted rigidly to rehearsals—the count, his mind at ease, working as indefatigably as the rest,—and the afternoons to the relaxation of drives or rides. And the order of the drives seemed tacitly understood without any prepared plan ; the count with Pella in the baronial buggy heading the two-by-two arrangement.

De Grey had stocked his stables well with a quantity of fine saddle-horses ; and frequently the whole party rode forth, forming quite an imposing cavalcade. The *maestro*, who seemed to thoroughly enjoy himself, fairly scoured the country far and near on horseback, accompanied only by Mr. Whyte and the two young Thornes, at all times, when the entire party did not ride with them.

As the rehearsals progressed, the whole house went wild over Breta's singing, and young Fred Thorne, who lived solely in and for music, made of her a worship.

"She alights on her notes like a bird, and rings out those lark-like tones of hers with such ease and purity of intonation, with such a plombness, never obliterating the beat of the measure by faulty slurrings, every note being taken with a clean attack with the true glottis-stroke, and *never* in the larynx with stiffened jaw and tongue (that horrible *voce bianca* we hear from the majority of singers), that every one must feel what the world is losing that she is not out in it as prima donna."

This young Thorne said to the *maestro*, and the reply was—the *maestro* transfixing him with his keen glance that added more force to his words :

"You may well rave, youngster. The world does not contain any thing so perfect—mind I say perfect—in the way of singing as the voice and method of the Madamigella Breta Garnet."

The only two not carried away by enthusiasm on the point of Breta's singing were Pella and the count.

But they had weighty matters of their own on hand to occupy their thoughts. For one thing Pella made it a study to select which of her endless variety of costly French dresses she should wear each day. And one day being, with the help of her French maid, more elegantly dressed than usual (it was a masterpiece of Worth's she wore, just sent her by her brother), the count could restrain the ardor of his love no longer. He made his declaration, mentioning casually that as his wife she would have access to all the courts of Europe, and was graciously accepted.

Frank congratulated her when Pella, with flushed cheeks, announced to her her triumph.

"He is the genuine article, Pella, and no humbug. His pedigree, Counsellor Black said, reaches back to the Huguenots. He is poor, and all that, but he is one of the bluest-blooded counts extant. And you—you have enough money, you know, for both."

"His ancestors were impoverished in the Revolution," returned Pella. "I wrote to my brother to ascertain all about him, and received his reply yesterday. He assures me the count

can have access to every court in Europe, and the count himself says so. As for money, fortunately I have, as you say, sufficient for both."

"Are you sure the count does not seek you just on account of your money, Pella?"

"He is entirely too noble for a thought of that kind. He loves me with the truest affection, for he has told me so."

"And you love him?"

"Most certainly I do."

"After having ascertained that he is truly a count, and can carry you into all the courts of Europe—with your own money?"

"How perfectly hateful you are, Frank. But you always were that. Of course *after* I had ascertained all about him. I should not have permitted myself to love him before, as it behooves me to protect myself—my father and mother both being dead, and my brother, like yours, only three years older than myself."

"I *was* hateful, Pella; pardon me," exclaimed Frank, thawing out with remorseful sympathy. "You *are* very much alone, and I should have thought of that—I, who have mother, father, brother, and sister. I am truly sorry for you,

and will be your friend and do what I can to prove it."

"I do not know as I shall stand in any need of the commiseration of any one. I shall have the count to protect me; and shall pass my life in very different scenes from these."

"It is always better to take a perfectly practical view of things," returned Frank, freezing up again.

"Certainly it is; for once I agree with you. But please understand that what I have told you is in confidence. When the suitable time comes it shall be imparted to all."

Frank promised, and then said: "But, Pella, one should be sure that one loves, you know. I had formed an idea somehow that you cared for Joslyn de Grey."

"How very absurd!" exclaimed Pella. "You know well enough he is engaged to Breta. I certainly think he could have done much better, but it is not for me to tell him so."

"Certainly not," assented Frank.

Frank had but little time to devote to considerations for Pella; she having an affair of her own that took all her wits to manage. And so far, no Wall Street operator could have

manipulated a crooked "corner" more cleverly.

Conynghame more than once had arrived almost to the point at which he was aiming; but Frank, with dexterous ingenuity, had always contrived some inopportune remark, teeming with such irresistible drollery, that Ralph, from an extremely sentimental mood, was forced into an extremely jovial one.

One afternoon he seemed unusually inspired, and had successfully parried all her whimsical speeches, until, as they were going through a long stretch of woods, dark and silent (the horse, with a loosened rein, rhythmically crunching the fallen leaves), he quietly but boldly took Frank's hand, that had been lying ungloved on her lap, within the firm clasp of his own long, white fingers, and commenced scrutinizing it.

"A vast difference between the color of the two hands, is there not, Col. Conynghame?" said Frank, in a tone of pretended indifference; "mine so excessively brown, what one might call a brown paw, and yours so—"

"And yet in the possession of this little brown paw lies all my future happiness," interrupted he, clasping it still more firmly.

"It seems incredible that a hand more or less can do so much as that for any one. So many people in this world have had their hands amputated and yet have lived and been happy."

"A hand more, not a hand less, is what I wish, Frank. Will you vouchsafe me this?"

"Colonel Conynghame, when you are done with my hand, I will trouble you to return it. I do not see what any one needs with more than two hands."

"But you see, Frances, I am not done with it, and I need, actually need, four. And more than all I need the warm heart accompanying this hand. Will you resign it to my keeping?"

"I am sure, Colonel Conynghame, if you are such a Briareus as all that, you had better make a collection of hands, winding up with clock hands; as for mine, it is entirely out of my power to give you what you have levied upon. And as for the other article for which you ask, why, that was yours ages ago. But how any one so highly cultured can wish to be bothered with such a slang-y, crude,—Colonel Conynghame, how did you like your Cousin Fred's improvisation this morning?"

But Ralph would not be put off. He told her,

still retaining her hand, how much he loved her, how beautiful he thought her, until, whetting her tongue to a double edge :

“What a curious coincidence, Colonel Conynghame!” said she; “I also consider you perfectly lovely. Too lovely for any thing! The first time I beheld you I was struck with your commanding appearance and elegant manners. Your eyes are positively divine, and your nose is the most chiselled nose I ever saw. I never could have loved any one less beautiful than you, or less altogether—”

She was going on, but unable longer to withstand the drollery of it, the woods rang with his peals of laughter, and Frank had gained her point, Ralph scarcely knowing whether he had or had not been accepted.

XXI.

THE DAY OF THE MATINÉE.

IT was in October ; the two and a half months of rehearsals were over, and the day of the matinee had arrived. Mr. Whyte, bearing in his hand some official papers, was seeking Breta, and found her with Frank and Mrs. de Grey in the little theatre where the gardener and his men were just completing the floral decorations.

He requested in his mild way permission to intrude a little business, saying apart to Breta :

"It relates to my brother-in-law, William Waldo, my dear Breta."

"You darling little uncle," returned Breta, laying her hand tenderly on his arm, "something has greatly disturbed you."

"I never have had much patience, my dear, when Waldo—who by his scaly, legal tricks contrived to make away with all I owned at one fell sweep—turns up, though now he has turned down I should have."

"Turned down, Uncle Ray?" repeated Breta.

"Dead, my dear. A ghost with the rest, and not a very good ghost either, I fear. He performed one act of restitution at the last, leaving me sole heir to all he owned, which in his will he confessed was not only legally mine but actually mine. You see, I was in those days utterly careless of money, and he had the sole management of mine."

Breta made no reply, but was looking thoughtfully on the floor.

"It is a very large property, Breta, and it will all be yours some day."

"Oh, don't, Uncle Ray, dear—"

"My dear, I won't—at least not now."

Signor Trapassi chancing in just then, Mr. Whyte handed him the papers. He took all in with one of his eagle glances, merely remarking dryly :

"The Signor Gulielmo Waldo performed one act of justice in his long life. Let us hope it may profit him hereafter. My dear madama," continued the *maestro*, turning to Mrs. de Grey, "I am truly sorry to leave Elmwood. I have passed here one of the pleasantest summers of my life. I start to-morrow morning

for the Falls, by way of Watkin's Glen. I shall take a peep from the top of the Catskills, and shall visit, in short, all the places of note in your country before I leave it. I shall steam through the chain of great lakes to the Western prairies, and shall return from California by way of Panama."

"You have made yourself well acquainted, I see, with the geography of our country, Signor Trapassi," returned Mrs. de Grey, in her pure Italian accent, looking at the *maestro* with the good, true look her son had inherited. "We shall hope to have you some time with us on your return before you sail for Europe."

The *maestro* was replying with a qualified affirmative, when Selma, with Miss Rutherford entered, followed by Bowers and the young Thornes.

"I came over early, as you see, this morning," said Miss Rutherford, "to offer my assistance; but I find nothing to do but to admire. The decorations are all exquisite, and the wilderness of flowers everywhere makes the whole house look like fairy-land."

"Then you, madam, are one of the happy mortals who have been in fairy-land and can

speak from experience," said Bowers, bowing whimsically to Miss Rutherford.

"You must excuse Brother Tom, Miss Rutherford," apologized Frank. "He is writing a book of travels, and is anxious to get all the information concerning undiscovered countries that he can."

Smiling blandly upon both sister and brother, Miss Rutherford wished to know when the matinee began.

"At two o'clock," replied Selma, "that those of our friends who so wish can return by the evening train."

"At two, sharp, the overture in one flat," added Bowers, who was assistant stage-manager.

"I begin to feel as though I should prefer being one of the audience, and I know Sadie does. Don't you, Selma and Breta?" said Frank, languidly seating herself.

"My heart fairly palpitates with the agitation of the coming ordeal. I know Joslyn's and Ralph's must. Don't yours, Fred and Carl?" mimicked Tom in falsetto. "These seats are so comfortable," and he threw himself into one of the luxurious seats for the audience.

The sound of numerous carriages on the gravel drive called Mrs. de Grey and Selma to welcome their guests, Breta, Mr. Whyte, and the *maestro* going out of the room at the same time with the two ladies.

“How large an audience do you expect, Miss Bowers?” asked Miss Rutherford.

“Over five hundred invitations were sent out, and we have received nearly one hundred regrets. We lunch at twelve to-day, to give us all plenty of time; and we dine at six after it is all over. We have the celebrated Gabriel *chef de cuisine*, and must expect wonders in the way of lunch and dinner. Excuse me a moment, Miss Rutherford, mamma has just arrived; I hear her voice. I will send one of the maids to show you the way to the dressing-rooms.” And Frank was off, her brother having preceded her.

Each one of the five hundred guests present had that day something to recall in after years; the whole thing, including the lunch and dinner of the famous Gabriel, being a decided success. The house from garret to cellar was literally a scene of enchantment; and the singers and orchestra so perfect in their various

parts, all executing them with such musical precision, and Breta fairly excelling herself, that, from the first note of the three hours' *matinée* to the last, the Signor Trapassi was in a state of intense satisfaction.

By half-past nine all the guests, save those who remained all night at Elmwood, among whom were Mr. and Mrs. Bowers, had gone to meet down or up trains, or had returned to their homes at Lea.

Through the windows of the great drawing-room came the pleasant October air, low fires in the grates removing the evening's chill, while various groups here and there were discussing the various topics the music had awakened.

In the deep embrasure of one of the windows Breta, de Grey, and the *maestro* were holding an animated disquisition on the merits of various composers. The moonlight streaming down on them mistily through the delicate tracery of the lace curtains, partially draped in as they were from the lights of the room by the heavy folds of damask hangings, gave to the *maestro's* tall form, dark face, and piercing eyes an almost weird look, while it heightened every

charm of Breta's young beauty. And de Grey, sitting a little more in the shade, drank in the loveliness of her ever-varying face, making now and then a remark so pertinently suggestive, that it set the *maestro* off again at elucidating in his strong, terse language some abstruse point he had well studied.

"Leaving abstrusities," said he, "and returning to our *matinée*, *Dio santo!* but young Thorne plays a remarkably sympathetic piano accompaniment. Carl also delighted me, and I cannot say enough on the excellence of the signora's harp. *Corpo di Bacco!* but it was fine."

"My mother plays the harp well," assented de Grey.

"And you, signore. I have seldom heard a *tenore* I like better. The timbre of your voice pleases me. You could make a great artist. But for the *Madamigella Breta*, here," continued the *maestro*, "*per l' amore di Dio!* What can I say? Her runs and trills are perfection—her *grupetti*, her *suoni martellati* faultless—her *portamento*, the ease with which she attacks the highest note, absolutely unequalled. And that last *crescendo di forza* of yours, signorina,"

concluded he, "was actually an impossibility. And it is my belief that you are no less than a sorceress—an *incantatrice*, or the *diavolessa* in person."

"Which interpretation of your last noun, *maestro mio*, am I to accept?" returned Breta, laughing.

"Oh, you are here, Joslyn!" exclaimed Selma, appearing from under the loopings of the heavy draperies. "Excuse me if I interrupt, but mamma wishes just one word with you. Hicks has called and is in much distress."

"*A fe*, but they are a very charming family!" remarked the *maestro* to Breta, after de Grey and his sister had left. "I wish—have been wishing to say something to you, *figlia mia*. I have been trembling, yes, actually trembling these three years past, fearing you might be finally induced to throw yourself away on that *scioccone*, Dunraven." Breta started perceptibly, the *maestro* had spoken in his most energetic Italian. "But you—you must accept my warmest congratulations on the choice you have made," continued he, more mildly. "The Signor de Grey is *generoso, naturale, cortese, benigno*—one of the very few genuine men I

ever met. Your future, signorina, lies bright before you."

Breta made no reply, but glanced up at the professore with a gravely appreciative look.

"What think you, *cara*," he added, changing his tone, "the Signora de Grey insisted on my accepting five thousand of the dollars of this country, when three thousand are all for which I had stipulated; and when—*alla buon ora*, I should have come all the same without a *danaro*, so much I wished to see and hear my madamigella. And then, to add insult to injury"—here the professore, speaking in a tone of delicate irony, flashed from the fire of his eyes a subtle glance of malicious humor—"to add insult to injury," he repeated with another lightning gleam, "the *maestro* Whyte fairly compelled me to take the same amount, mating it exactly, to pay for,—so he said—his niece's lessons this summer." And the professore concluded with a short, dry laugh.

"I do not feel that any money can repay you for what you have taught me, *maestro mio*," said Breta, with grave warmth; "I have learned much this summer."

The *maestro* gave Breta a questioning glance

from the fire of his eyes, and smiling, he offered her his arm and they joined de Grey, who was just seeking them; they passing on their way Bowers and his sister, sitting at a window, chatting together merrily.

"I tell you it will take me months to get over her voice. She is a marvel of a prima donna tamed down into quiet life," insisted Tom Bowers.

"*Tant mieux*," was the sententious reply.

"I question whether it is better to hide such a gift as hers under the bushel of private life," Tom declared.

"Tom, you should have come back from Paris when I wrote for you. Breta was spending the Christmas holidays with me—papa and mamma adoring her. What I wished was—"

"Oh, gammon, Sis., she never would have looked at me—that de Grey chap was just made for her. He is worth ten of me—ten times as clever—ten times as—"

"Tom, we girls go into heroics over other girls. I did not know your sublime sex did over each other. But, Tom, let me tell you, you are not to be sneezed at. If you had only come—if Breta had seen you before de Grey—"

“ Please disabuse yourself, Sis., of the Breta Garnet theory. Persons, like water, must find their level to be happy in this world. And Miss Breta Garnet is so far above my level that I should stand only with clasped hands in an attitude of adoration all my life. That you see would be excessively inconvenient. Now, that little gem of a Sadie Burrill is quite on my level. I can comprehend and love the dear little thing without feeling in the least like falling down on my knees and worshipping her. De Grey, who lives in the seventh heaven already, is just sublime enough and all that, for one so transcendently gifted and lovely as Breta Garnet. They will go on soaring through life, while I, who have not fledged my wing-feathers, should I attempt to soar, would go up like a rocket and come down like a stick. He, you see, being on her level—”

“ Your head is certainly getting level, Tom, for that is the first sensible speech I ever heard you make.”

“ Thank you, Sis. ; I hope Sadie has imbibed from you your faculty for combing a fellow’s hair ; it is so vivifying. I say, Sis., that Prince Conynghame of yours is the deadeast-in-love of any man I ever saw, except de Grey.”

“And you—you are not, you know, Tom.”

“Frank, I can tell you two who are not ; and those two are the count and that Miss Morton, —with her cool, Greek face—who thinks a deuced sight more of de Grey than she does of her count.”

“Can you see that, Tom ? I have known it from the first time she ever saw him. But knowing she has no chance there, she is unwilling to let slip the chance of being presented as a countess to all the courts of Europe,—there, that was a secret ! I have not told it to Breta, even.”

“All safe, Frank. But do look at our mamma making so much of your friend Breta, and beaming so radiantly on de Grey. Our mamma is a very handsome and well-conducted middle-aged lady, and I for one am tremendously proud of her.”

“She is a true Bowers of the energetic school,” acquiesced Frank. “But she is a modified Bowers, with the slang rubbed out of her by the habit of years of good society. There, Tom, they have commenced on ghosts. I shall not sleep a wink to-night ; but do let us go over and hear what Mr. Whyte is saying.”

“My dear madame,” he was saying to Mrs. de Grey, “if you had been buried for years, with no other companionship frequently for days at a time than ghosts, you would not have known whether you knew or not. I was beginning to consider them the reality of life; and that once in the arena as public lecturer my subject would be the ‘Coming Ghost’ :—Will the coming ghost smoke tobacco? Will the coming ghost eat horse-radish? Shave notes,”—and Mr. Whyte gave one of his twisted smiles. “Will not the coming ghost be the chief actor on this mundane sphere? But since the ghosts have quitted this mansion I begin to doubt whether I ever heard the unaccountable sounds that—”

“There is no doubt in *my* mind on the subject,” interrupted Black, with a ponderous laugh. “The unaccountable sounds were in the room with me—were invisible, and were a reality.”

“They might have proceeded from cats. Cats have great ventriloquial powers,” suggested Bowers.

“Cats sing most astonishingly,” rejoined Black, “but cats cannot sing ‘*Una voce poco fa*’ like a highly cultured prima donna; eh, Signor Trapassi?”

"Unless it were the shade of the great *Cat-alini*," said Bowers, the *maestro* only smiling significantly for all reply.

"Tom, I owe you one for your *Cat-alini*."

"Frank, you have owed me one since day before yesterday—so now you owe me two."

"I should think, Tom, you would consider it *in-for-a-dig* to dun. But I can only say, *su-um cuique*," returned Frank.

"There, Tom, said Mr. Bowers, *père*, laughing, "you are paid with interest. Now let us solve the ghost problem. I side, so far, with Mr. Black."

Young Fred Thorne suggested boys. He knew from late experience what boys could achieve in the way of curious noises; and in this his brother Carl joined him.

The boy theory was discussed, and illustrated by numerous anecdotes, until Black admitted that all the noises he heard that memorable morning might have been made by boys, especially the Callithumpian concert. "But no boy, or cat, could have sung the '*Una voce*,'" insisted he, "or that divine gem from Himmel's *Ossian*, except, perchance, a boy from the Cistine Chapel," he added.

"There never was a boy who would not have ended on the key-note," observed Mr. Whyte, with another of his twisted smiles. "Even cats always end on the tonic. But I find myself going back to my old disbelief in every thing supernatural. Some learned metaphysicians declare the whole universe to be but an idea. Ghosts then can be but the shadow of an idea."

"Let who may ridicule these things," remarked Mrs. Bowers, "we have too many well authenticated instances of unaccountable sights and sounds, of warnings and presentiments to discredit entirely what is called the supernatural."

"Brother Joslyn's theory, Mrs. Bowers," said Miss Selma, "that the unseen world and the palpable world are so closely connected, that what we deem the supernatural, is only a rarefied type of the natural world, is, I find, getting to be, with some modifications, mine also."

"A certain profound French ethicist asserts that human perfection—the perfect man—will be the product only of the coalescing of the two worlds—the physical and spiritual," observed de Grey.

"*All* the ghosts of the past and present to be *always* around us," exclaimed Frank, with a great shudder, "to occupy our houses with us—without paying any rent! For *my* part I had rather be a little less perfect and have them keep at a respectful distance."

"That is one interpretation of the Frenchman's knotty point, Miss Bowers," returned Conynghame, laughing.

"A knot too hard for Sir Isaac Newton to untie, as he declares in concluding his theory on optical illusions," said de Grey.

"It was not too hard a knot for Socrates," exclaimed Bowers, flourishing his right arm oratorically; "he came out flat-footed, to say nothing of bare-footed on all that relates to—"

"Say ghosts, Tom," interrupted Frank.

"Socrates, being himself always warned of all hostile things by the voice of his *dæmon* or good spirit," interposed Breta, with a laudable desire of helping Tom out, "taught the meaning and value of—"

"Say ghosts, Breta. That includes it all," said Frank.

"These, alas! are degenerate times, Miss Frank," asserted Mr. Black, rolling out a pon-

derous laugh. "Times of scepticism and matter of fact. The rosy-cross is broken; Eulisia and Delphi are buried in their own ashes; the shades of Académie are silent; the symbolic lore of Egypt is swathed within the endless wrappings of mummies; even the witches of Salem have flown away on their own broomsticks; and still with all our demand for the real, we are all slyly fond of a supernatural riddle that will play hob with our natural hair."

"It is so easy to doubt," returned Conyng-hame.

"And so easy to swallow appearances in blind credulity; the death in either case of faith—the belief of conviction," added de Grey. "The faith that is the culmination of God's power in man,—that nurse of prophets and cradle of martyrs that wrought such wonderful results in the old Bible times, teaching that the inner life can manifest itself through outward signs not only in revelation but in valuable scientific discoveries as well—is possessed in these days by those only who are the leaders of the forlorn hopes of the world."

"It is some forlorn hope I have always desired to help rescue from ruin," said Breta, so

unaffectedly that the egotism of her speech was lost in its perfect simplicity.

"Whither thou goest I will go, Breta. Shall it be through the Dark Continent?" exclaimed Frank.

"Miss Garnet need not go to the Dark Continent to become the arbiter of a forlorn hope, when she is so much needed in the Home Mission to help elevate the hearts of her friends to the true faith by the divine strains of her voice," said Conynghame.

"Col. Conynghame, hand what you have just said over to me, and consider it re-said," uttered Frank, enthusiastically.

"*Moi aussi!*" exclaimed Tom, tragically.

Pythagoras taught by precept and example that the working out one's own particular gift is the highest meed we can bestow on humanity. Need we of this æsthetic age, who revere the antique, go farther back for authority?" remarked de Grey, having laughed at Bowers' melodramatic imitation of Frank.

"And how much, how many of the world's great problems have hinged on that Pythagorean theorem,—that placed the sun in the centre instead of its having to gallop around the

earth,—which Copernicus revived and Galileo perfected, and to which Pythagoras, in his gratitude at having discovered, sacrificed an hundred oxen?" observed Counsellor Black, oratorically.

"One thing that hinged upon that same forty-seventh proposition of the first book of Euclid, was a lively bout I had with Old Prex; and I barely got over that asses' bridge!" And Bowers laughed as he concluded.

"Are you quite sure you *did* get over it, Tom?" asked Frank, her eyes brimming over, teasingly.

"Breakers ahead! Look out, Sis., I owe you one now."

"You need not be particular about paying it, Tom. I am magnanimous and forgive my debtors," returned Frank.

"That is the way they keep it up at home," said Mr. Bowers, *père*, who had been listening silently to all the preceding conversation. "They give one no rest," added he, laughing.

"That *pons asinorum* was a terrible bridge to get over, you see, Mr. Bowers," said Black, laughing in sympathy. "But now that the world is safely this side of it, where the digging

is so much easier, and so many buried truths are being unearthed, I think we might dig out a solution to the singing and noises I heard in this house four months ago—and I did hear them. You, Joslyn, who have studied so deeply into this sort of lore and can sustain your position by history, tradition, and science, should ferret this thing out.”

“All I have feared, Benjamin,” returned Selma, “has been that, in ferreting it out, Joslyn might lose sight of the affairs of our mundane—”

“Never fear it, Cousin Selma,” interrupted Conynghame, with an energy so quiet and suave that he seemed more as though coinciding with, than interrupting, her. “Be sure of this, Joslyn is not one to lose sight of any thing.”

A comprehensive gleam of good-humored mirth shot from de Grey’s eyes as he replied :

“Selma, you and Ralph speak of me on the nay and aye sides as though I were *non est inventus*.”

“Less than a ghost,” returned Conynghame.

“Now that you are back to the starting-

point, ghosts, I do not see that we have solved any thing except that Tom's ghosts are cats, Mr. Fred Thorne and his brother Carl's ghosts are boys, Mr. Whyte 'mixed up so,' on his, and Mr. Black sure of his," asserted Frank, adding : " And while mamma, Signor Trapassi, Messrs. de Grey and Conynghame are meandering in a fog on the question, I, like Counsellor Black, am a firm believer in—ghosts."

" Counsellor Black considers himself in good company," said he, bowing to Frank and laughing urbanely.

The *maestro* who had been a silent and attentive listener to all that had been said, manifesting by the keen glance of his eyes, or by a ready smile his appreciation of what, as the case might be, was profound or humorous, now observed in a tone of dry irony :

" Suppose, *Dio sante!*—suppose we give the *spiriti*, the ghosts, the benefit of the doubt."

XXII.

A BOLD STROKE.

ON the day after the matinée, Elmwood was almost deserted of guests ; Breta, Mr. Whyte, and Pella only remaining. The count went to prepare, as in confidence he told Selma, for his marriage—Miss Morton expecting her *trousseau* from Paris.

Frank had accompanied her mother and father home, but only for a day, having tragically declared that she could not live away any longer than one day from Breta.

In the afternoon of the very quiet day, Pella came into Breta's room with her sweetest smile.

“What shall I wear, Breta, dear? I wish to look extra nice, as it is not often I get much of Mr. de Grey's valuable time.” And Pella gave Breta a very arch look, adding : “And for a drive, too.”

“A drive, Pella!” repeated Breta, somewhat startled.

“And I must be ready in five minutes,” returned Pella, nodding her head significantly. “It would not answer to keep Mr. de Grey waiting, you know.”

Much bewildered, Breta, arrested in her own preparations, which had been hurried, as she did not wish to lose a moment of the time absolutely alone with de Grey,—the time so precious to her,—turned abruptly facing Pella with the quiet dignity so entirely her own :

“Did you say, Pella,” she demanded, “that you are going for a drive now,—at once with Jos—Mr. de Grey?”

“Just as soon as Fanchon can dress me, dear,” responded Pella, quite innocently ; “and as we shall not be back before dusk (poor I have never been to the cave yet—did I say there is where we are going?), why, I shall take warm wraps with me—these long drives make one so chilly. But here I stand talking instead of getting ready. I will run in a moment for you to see if my bows are all right ; your taste is so perfect.” And she bounded off gayly.

Breta stood confused, almost stunned. Her first impulse was to seek Joslyn. Then calming herself by an effort, the thought came to her that Selma must have concluded to go with them in the carriage ; and nothing doubting, she had just concluded her preparations as Pella returned.

"We will go down together, Pella," said she. "How did Selma find time to go with us? I thought she intended to oversee the arrangement of the ferneries herself."

"Yes, dear, both she and Mrs. de Grey are engaged with the florist and his men," replied Pella, surveying herself complacently in the mirror.

Breta grew troubled again ; and walking thoughtfully over to the window, saw what confirmed her doubts.

"Ah, Charlie has just driven up with the two-horse phaeton !" exclaimed Pella, who had tripped gracefully over to the window after Breta. "Really, the only arrangement for two persons I like is a phaeton. But *au revoir*, love" ; and Pella kissing Breta, skimmed airily to the door of the room, looking back to say :

“How shall you employ yourself while we are gone, Breta darling?”

The we, grated on Breta harshly, but she answered with composure that she had letters to write.

“Oh, I know well who will come in for one letter—if he has not already returned from Europe!” exclaimed Pella, kissing her hand lightly to Breta.

De Grey was standing on the veranda awaiting Breta's approach. Hearing Pella's light step he looked up from the flowers he held in his hand, with his heart in his eyes; but encountering the steely gleam of Pella's uncertain blue eyes, his expression instantly changed.

“Oh, Mr. de Grey, I am afraid you will have to be content with me for company this afternoon. Dear Breta sent me down to ask you to please excuse her and take me instead. I hope you will not be *very* much disappointed.”

“Did Bre—did Miss Garnet give any reason for breaking her engagement with me, Miss Morton?” asked de Grey with a directness that any one less amiable than Pella would have resented.

“Oh, Mr. de Grey, you *are* disappointed.

I told Breta you would be. But she would have it so—and I leave Elmwood so soon. I will go right up and call Breta down, Mr. de Grey; she *must* keep her engagement with you,” and Pella spoke with such deprecating sweetness, that de Grey, who had turned from her with the intention apparently of going in search of Breta himself, suddenly turned toward her.

“Say no more, Miss Morton, I beg,” said he, “as Bre—as Miss Garnet wishes it,” and realizing that he was quite rude to his sister’s guest, he offered her his arm with cold politeness and assisted her into the phaeton—Breta looking down on them from her window’s height above—and carelessly tossing away the beautiful flowers in his hand, and taking the reins from Charlie, the groom, de Grey seated himself beside Pella and drove off.

To make amends for his rudeness he drove where Pella wished; but his manner was so cold and he so absent, that any one less good-tempered than she would have requested to be driven back in affront. But to her every thing was delightful. It was Mr. de Grey this and Mr. de Grey that, and just before they arrived

back at Elmwood in the early twilight, she remarked, as by accident :

"I wonder if Breta has finished her letters. She said she had letters to write, but I think she meant letter. It has been a great secret, you know, Mr. de Grey—Breta's marriage, I mean—now so soon to take place."

"So soon?" repeated de Grey, quite aroused from a reverie into which he had fallen.

"Within a week, you know, Mr. de Grey; but if you do not know, pray do not let it transpire that I told you."

"Indeed! And who is to be the happy man?" asked de Grey, with cold, doubting irony.

"Why, Mr. de Grey," returned Pella, with innocent archness, "who could it be but the gentleman to whom Breta has been so long engaged—Mr. Dunraven, of course."

As de Grey made no reply, Pella, with a light laugh, said very sweetly :

"You look perfectly incredulous, Mr. de Grey. Now let me tell you that you know very little what is in young ladies' minds. Breta, aware that Mr. Whyte and all her friends are not much in favor of Mr. Dunraven, has kept her own counsel. But you will see that I am right. Breta herself told me—"

"It is all a mistake, Miss Morton, be assured of that," returned de Grey, as with freezing politeness he assisted Pella from the phaeton.

They found the family assembled at the dinner-table, and Dunraven (who had apparently dropped down from the skies) assiduously attentive to Breta, who, pale and silent, neither accepted nor repelled his attentions.

Breta did not vouchsafe de Grey one glance. Never once looking up from her plate, she accepted what was offered her, but ate not a mouthful.

A silence seemed to have fallen on all. Mrs. de Grey and Selma, observant of their guests, looked troubled, and Mr. Whyte, sorely perplexed, glanced from one to another, arriving at no satisfactory solution to the mystery.

Pella and Dunraven were the life of the table. It was as though some great calamity had befallen the household, and Pella, generously sacrificing all thoughts of self, was making unflagging efforts to keep up the spirits of the others.

During the remainder of the evening de Grey could find no opportunity to have a word with Breta. She avoided him with studied care,

permitting Dunraven to hover near her, although she had no words for him either. Still Dunraven, with his inimitable attitudes and fine flow of language, saw nothing, understood nothing. His coolness and tact bore him through. And while making himself entertaining to all, and especially interesting Mrs. de Grey with his varied information, he so contrived that all he said should be a personal and deferential attention to Breta.

At breakfast the next morning and at lunch and during the day it was the same : Breta, pale and silent, appearing with the rest, but eating nothing, giving de Grey no opportunity for a word, or a look, with her, and Dunraven ever hovering near her.

In the afternoon de Grey strolled through the grounds alone, and seated himself in one of the summer-houses. A light step approaching attracted his attention, and Pella appeared before him.

"Excuse me, Mr. de Grey," said she, timidly, "but Breta wished me and no one but me to hand you this."

Pella's "this," was a little sealed note, and it ran thus :

"Do not seek an explanation. I felt it my duty to fulfil a promise made years ago, and in the face of my promise to you I became his wife. Forgive and forget the unhappy

"BRETA DUNRAVEN."

Quite stunned, de Grey sought for calmness. He examined the note, turned it over, and read it again. It was unmistakably Breta's handwriting. He then re-read it, and having risen on Pella's approach, he turned toward her, asking in a stifled voice :

"Do you know the contents of this note, Miss Morton?"

"Assuredly," she replied. "At Breta's request I was witness to the ceremony,—the only witness."

Steadying himself de Grey proceeded toward the house, Pella walking by his side, assuring him in the sweetest of her sweet tones that he had a warm and sympathizing friend in her. But de Grey made no response to her offers of sympathy, so absorbed, so confounded was he by the blow he had received, that he scarcely heard her.

It was just then that a carriage drove up, containing Frank, Conynghame, and little Nelly

Bowers, whom Frank was to re-place at Miss Rutherford's.

As she ascended the steps of the veranda with Conynghame, Frank took in the strangeness of it all. Pella looking so fresh and bright, so innocently happy, that it was quite refreshing to see her; and de Grey so haggard and pale, that it was not refreshing to see him; while Breta, the ghost of herself, was sitting on the veranda; Dunraven in the most exquisite of his exquisite attitudes, leaning against the fluted column close beside her.

Selma, who had been sitting beside Breta, came forward to greet Frank and her cousin Ralph, giving the kindest welcome also to little Nelly. But she, with her brother, seemed much troubled, and she gave a commiserating look at her brother, who, after a few constrained words to his cousin Ralph, and Frank, passed quite abruptly into the house and up the great staircase to the seclusion of his own room.

Frank ran up to Breta, kissed her most affectionately, Breta's sad, white face striking a chill into her heart, and then ran off into the house and up the broad staircase also, but not

in search of de Grey. It was Mr. Whyte she sought ; and confronting that little gentleman in his own den, surrounded by music and ruled paper, she exclaimed energetically :

“ Mr. Whyte, *can* you tell me the meaning of this horrible state of affairs ? ”

“ State of affairs, Miss Frank ! Have the ghosts really returned ? ” and Mr. Whyte looked up with abstracted interest from the figured bars he was noting.

“ It is worse than ghosts, Mr. Whyte. Here I return after two days' absence to find Pella Morton bossing the whole shebang. She has Joslyn de Grey on a string, and he looks like a worried tiger—haggard and gloomy. Has Breta thrown him ? She is paler than any of her ghosts, and Selma looks troubled enough with it all. And to cap the whole, there is that disgusting Dunraven—pardon me, I forgot he is your nephew,” and Frank stopped to take breath.

“ No harm done, Miss Frank ; I have noticed all this with much distress of mind,” responded Mr. Whyte, in meek dejection.

“ Can you give me no clue, Mr. Whyte, nothing to start from, for I shall pitch in and shall not rest until I ferret it all out ? ”

"I can only surmise," returned Mr. Whyte, with a sorely puzzled air, "that all the unpleasantness dates from an unaccountable drive Miss Morton took with de Grey yesterday afternoon."

"Thank you; I am certain it is all Pella," said Frank, and she flew down stairs, but found no one but Conynghame, and he was alone in the drawing-room, looking over the late periodicals.

"Ralph," said she, mysteriously, "something awful has transpired, and I am finding it out. There, I knew it!" she exclaimed, darting off before Conynghame had time to speak, leaving him to politely speculate on the cause of her flight.

He looked from the window through which Frank had glanced when she declared she "knew it," and seeing only Pella and Dunraven sauntering toward the central summer-house, he gave it up as a conundrum too deep for solution; and throwing aside his magazine, he went in search of his cousin Joslyn.

Frank left the house from the back entrance, running like a deer, and, skirting around under cover of the foliage, arrived at the central sum-

mer-house, where she saw Pella was going, and concealed herself in the thick shrubbery, just in time to hear the rumbling tones of Dunraven's voice, and then Pella's high falsetto.

"One never knows who may overhear you in the house," said Pella; "but here one is safe from eavesdroppers. Breta is in her own room; Mr. de Grey is in his sister's room—I heard both of their voices distinctly,—and Mrs. de Grey is with them; Frank is in the drawing-room with Colonel Conynghame—I saw them both as I left the house; and Mr. Whyte is at his everlasting music. So you see I can say a few words to you unheard by any one."

Frank stifled a sneeze, having run herself into a perspiration.

"Say on, Miss Morton, I am all ears."

"Never was truer word spoken—the ears of a jackass!" inaudibly muttered Frank.

"I only wish to say, Mr. Dunraven, that I give the whole thing up. Mr. de Grey is quite intractable, and for a gentleman of so much refinement, is positively rude. As I promised you, I secured you a chance for you to see Breta alone, inducing her to believe that Mr. de Grey had invited me for that drive, and inducing him

to believe that Breta had already married you. I quite perjured myself, and could be taken up for a forger," and Pella laughed gaily, adding: "for it seemed *such* a pity that one so handsome, and with such prospects as Mr. de Grey, should throw himself away on such a nobody as Breta Garnet."

"What I have been trying all my life for—to secure the regards of Miss Garnet—the loveliest, the most gifted of her sex—in no sense a nobody, her family being among the oldest—"

"Now you know, Mr. Dunraven, I do not mean—"

"Excuse me, Miss Morton, but I am quite soured that all your diplomatic tact and skill have proved so unavailing. I have just received from Bre—Miss Garnet, such a spirited and galling negative to my oft-repeated question that—"

"There! I will positively hear no more!" exclaimed Frank, springing lightly from her hiding-place. "I divined it all, and now my worst suspicions are confirmed." And before the electrified pair fully realized what had electrified them, Frank had disappeared. Encoun-

tering Angelique, she asked where she should find Mr. de Grey.

"He has just started for Europe, mees," replied Angelique.

"Where is Miss de Grey? Tell me quickly, Angelique. Good heavens! Europe!" and Frank rushed to Selma's room where Angelique had directed her, and burst in without stopping to knock, almost breathlessly exclaiming:

"Selma, send some one at once to recall your brother. It is all a wicked scheme of Pella's; I have found it all out."

"I will ring for Bolton," replied Selma, hastily, readily comprehending, and rising she pulled the bell-rope.

But Frank, not waiting for the ceremonious Bolton, bolted off to the stables, speeding like an antelope in full chase, and giving hurried orders for the swiftest horse to be saddled, and for Charlie, one of the grooms, to ride like the wind to the station, and to tell Mr. de Grey that something very important had occurred, and that Miss Selma wished him to return at once.

"Now tell me all about it, my dear Frank," urged Selma, who had hurried toward the

stables after Frank. "You are quicker-witted than I, and quite right, I should not have waited for Bolton. Poor Joslyn!"

"Oh, I hope it may not be too late!" exclaimed Frank.

"But you do not tell me why you are so flushed and excited, nor what Pella Morton has done, nor why you wish Joslyn recalled," said Selma, putting her arm around Frank's waist and walking on with her toward the house.

Frank found Selma more shocked than surprised at the discovery she had made.

"Let us go at once to poor Breta," urged Selma, with a sweet sympathy beaming in her mild eyes. "I have been even more troubled for her than for Joslyn."

"During all this time," said Selma, after Frank, in Breta's room, had narrated Pella's interview with Dunraven the second time for Breta's benefit, "Joslyn has said nothing to me—not a word—until half an hour or so ago. He then showed me a note he had just received from Breta—or, at least, in Breta's handwriting,—announcing her marriage with Dunraven, and signed 'Breta Dunraven'; and simply saying, 'I am going to Europe, Selma,

to try and recover from the shock of this,' he kissed me and was gone."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Frank. "Did Pella go as far as *that*?"

"How could—how *could* Joslyn have believed it possible for me to—" cried Breta, a hot flush suffusing her blanched face.

"How could—how *could* Breta have believed it possible for him to—" cried Frank, catching Breta in her arms and kissing her. "Why did you credit Pella when she came to you with that cock-and-bull story about Joslyn's asking her to go with him? It's as broad as it is long. But people in love are *such* fools. Here is Joslyn steaming off to Europe, and here are you starving yourself to death—and all for nothing," and Frank threw herself into a chair, fanning herself violently with the black Spanish fan at her chatelaine.

"And you, Frank, who have been so fortunate, it seems, as to have escaped the contagion?" asked Selma, laughing in all her trouble.

"Oh, I? I'm not sentimental and all that," returned Frank, airily. "I am fond of Ralph, of course—awfully fond of him. But when he gets spooney, I laugh him out of it, and he

politely (Ralph could not be any thing but polite) surrenders at discretion. But what gets me," continued she, seriously, "is why Joslyn, who has such insight into character, and why you, Breta, who, although you always judge people from your own sublime stand-point, still know Pella so well, did not both of you divine her little game. I should have twigged at once."

"I believe *you* would, Frank," and Breta laughed at Frank's words and manner because she could not help it. "But it was so sudden," extenuated Breta, "so unexpected, so naturally done, and so—"

"And so—catty," interrupted Frank. "Pella certainly has a genius for lying, if for nothing else."

"In this—this misunderstanding I have been more to blame than Joslyn, infinitely more," acknowledged Breta, remorsefully. "I see it all now, just what a—fool I was. I should have gone to him at once, as I first thought. And then I held out so—but I will not dwell on what Pella has done; it makes every drop of blood in me boil,"

"I love to boil, Breta," exclaimed Frank, with

energy. "Boiling in a righteous cause is perfectly invigorating."

A knock came at the door. It was Bolton who had come to say that Charlie had returned from the station and found the train had just started.

"And Joslyn said he would have time only to get to New York and reach the steamer before the hour of sailing," said Selma.

"Send a telegram at once to the steamship office, nevertheless, Selma," urged Breta; "the steamer may have been delayed."

Frank was with the much-neglected Conyng-hame, explaining to him, and Breta was with her uncle, when Charlie returned again from the station to say that the return telegram stated that the steamer had sailed.

The dinner-gong sounded, but never was so daintily cooked dinner more slighted: de Grey on his way to Europe, Pella Morton on her way to Saratoga—her aunt had sent for her, she sweetly told Selma and Mrs. de Grey when she bade them good-by. And Dunraven, having aroused the warm sympathies of both Mrs. de Grey and Selma in his behalf, on the score of his undying love for Breta, a love, as he averred,

of nineteen years' growth, as old as Breta herself, also bade farewell, and went no one knew whither.

Breta wrote a letter to de Grey that evening, that no one saw. It lay, white and silent, closely packed with its numerous fellows—so many individual identities, that were messengers of joy to some, of grief to others; that were wave-tossed and wind-tossed; that had wellnigh found a watery grave,—and steaming at last safely into harbor, each mute intelligence found its final destination.

XXIII.

THE HALF IS GREATER THAN THE WHOLE.

ALL who had been staying at Elmwood, with the exception of Pella and the count, were in New York, awaiting the arrival of the steamer containing de Grey, who had started for home three days after arriving in Liverpool. On the same day, in that city also, he had received Breta's letter. He had previously cabled his arrival to his mother and sister, and had received cable telegrams in return individually, as well as collectively, from all most nearly interested in him.

As Frank passed into the elegantly appointed drawing-room of her father's princely up-town residence, Conynghame turned, at her approach, from the contemplation of the master-work of art by Meissonier to the master-work of nature, his fine, powerful face lighting up with the admiration he felt for the beautiful

vision before him, that the painting had failed to call forth. And the beautiful vision, as her splendid glance rested in his, fully appreciated the admiration points she had evoked in his eyes.

"Frances," said he, after the greetings were over, "I have an extra carriage at the door exclusively for Joslyn and Breta, that they can—"

"Have a chance to fight it out by themselves. How very thoughtful of you, Ralph," interrupted Frank. "You put yourself in his place."

"Precisely so," returned Conynghame, with a laugh.

"The steamer is detained off Sandy Hook longer than usual, is it not?" asked Frank, taking off her gloves to select some buds from a vase of choice flowers, which, arranging into an exquisite button-hole bouquet, she coyly placed on the breast of Conynghame's coat.

"The fog was lifting, the last despatch stated, and the steamer is now coming up the harbor," replied Conynghame, looking down through the flossy threads of her rich, dark hair on the deft, little, brown, tapering fingers at their work.

“And then poor Breta will see Joslyn,” said Frank, looking up at Conynghame, and then with a sweep of her long, jet-black lashes shutting him out again as she softly patted down the flowers, having finished arranging them. “Breta looks like something glorified. She is the loveliest being I ever saw at any time, but this morning she absolutely takes your breath away to behold her.”

“Not a doubt of it,” assented Conynghame, looking straight into Frank’s eyes.

“Oh, if you turn every thing *that* way I ’ll—”

“Pray don’t, I entreat!” exclaimed Conynghame, laughing at the recollection of the many spicy retaliations to which she had treated him.

“It is quite time we started,” said Selma, coming into the room in her becoming carriage dress. “Benjamin has just arrived, and has an extra carriage for Joslyn and Breta. We must manage that she does not suspect—”

“Are all ready?” exclaimed Tom Bowers, hastily entering the room. “Another despatch just received, and we ’ll be in time to meet the steamer at her dock if we start at once. Where ’s Miss Breta? The carriages are all at

the door, with an additional one I ordered for—”

“For Mr. de Grey’s valet, Tom. Just the thing. Judson can now be driven from the steamer in state.”

“Are you out of your head, Frank? De Grey’s valet will ride with the coachman of course,” said Tom.

“Not so, Tom. Don’t you see? Ralph has ordered an extra carriage—now at the door—for Breta; Selma, or rather Mr. Black, another—now at the door—for Joslyn; and you a third—now at the door—for Joslyn’s valet. Don’t you see, a sum in the rule of three? When shall the procession start?”

“Frank, you are a humbug. But we waste time; shall I ring to hurry up the rest? Ah, here they come,” and Tom grotesquely checked off the whole party with his fingers.

Breta had just received a private telegram from de Grey, and the joy of it shone in her eyes and in her lovely face, surrounding her as with a halo.

“Breta, you twinkle like a star,” said Frank.

“Come, let us be off,” and Tom offered his arm to Sadie.

"Mr. Whyte, take good care of Breta," said Frank, laughing, as she followed Tom and Sadie, on Conynghame's arm. "She looks like a flame, fairly incandescent; like something not of this earth."

"I say, Sis., where did you find that big word?" asked Tom, looking around at Frank, with Sadie on his arm.

How Breta and de Grey made their peace never transpired. All that was heard was as de Grey was assisting Breta from the carriage, in front of the Bowers' mansion.

"Joslyn," she asked, "how soon do you sail for Europe again?"

"Whenever you are ready to go with me," was the reply.

And all that was seen of the peace-making was what appeared in their countenances, radiant with the fulness of their content.

The carriages reduced in number to four, all stopped at the Bowers', where, by special invitation, the fatted calf, in honor of de Grey's return, was to be eaten. And just as the rather lively ceremony of dinner was over, a farewell call was received from Count Gueret, who informed his friends that he was to sail on the

morrow with Miss Morton and her aunt, to join her brother in Paris, and that the wedding was to take place in his own chateau, then being magnificently fitted up—but with whose money he did not specify.

Weeks of much gaiety followed, all remaining in New York at the de Grey's and Bowers'—their residences being but a few blocks apart. Elmwood being left in the care of Mrs. Judith, who had proved so efficient and trustworthy, with her tablets hanging at her side on which to write her orders.

There were operas to be heard, pictures to be seen, and meantime great preparations were going on for a great event: the four marriages.

Invitations to all the distinguished doings in fashionable life poured in upon them. Breta, Frank, and Sadie were admired as new stars in the firmament of fashion; and those who were fortunate enough to hear Breta sing talked of nothing but her voice, her method, and her marvellous beauty.

Little Mr. Whyte, with his wealth, became a mark for designing mammas. Never were such strains as those produced by his Stradivarius;

and with mild astonishment he accepted their adulations in most oblivious innocence.

One day at dinner (they were all dining with Mrs. de Grey that day) an imposing letter illuminated by a coronet was handed to Selma.

"Monsieur, the Count, and Madame, the Countess Gueret's wedding cards," said she, handing them to her mother.

"*I* never should have married a man as old again as myself if *I* had been Pella!" exclaimed Frank, with a shiver. "Just think once, the count is forty and Pella twenty. When *she* is forty he will be eighty, and when she is eighty he will be one hundred and sixty! *I* could not stand a husband one hundred and sixty years old." And Frank shivered again.

"Miss Frances has evidently been studying the lightning calculator," observed de Grey, turning to Conynghame, who was shaking with laughter.

"Frank learned the rule of Hesiod's staff with Professor Broadhead, and he insisted so savagely that 'the half is greater than the whole,'" said Breta, with a quizzically loving look at Frank, "that she gave him a Roland for his Oliver."

"We are all athirst for information, Miss Breta," said Black.

"Come, Sis., I can see by Miss Breta's face it is too good to be lost," insisted Tom; "we are dying for the Roland."

"You may give it, Breta," consented Frank.

"It was in the prosody lesson," began Breta; "I, also was in the class. The professor was unwarrantably rude in criticising a scanning exercise of Frank's, averring, with a sneer, that in attempting the iambic of the Homeric hexameter, she had introduced dactyls enough to drive old Melesigenes mad. And then he quoted Hesiod's celebrated staff from his '*Works and Days*,' and Frank said it was absurd to say the half is greater than the whole. Whereupon the professor started on the war-path in earnest, declaring that either Miss Bowers or he should quit the school. Then it was that for his ancient classics Frank gave him a leaf from what she calls the modern classics."

"The pit and gallery shriek for the leaf from the modern classics," said Tom.

"Oh, it was over a year ago, when I was young and foolish," returned Frank, laughing. "When he said that either he or I must quit the school,

I told him that as he had declared some one must go, and as he was on his ear he had better walk off on his ear with Hesiod's staff to lean on."

"Why, Frank!" exclaimed her mother.

"Shocking, was it not, mamma?" said Frank.

"And the result?" asked Conynghame, nearly convulsed.

"The result was," interposed Sadie, blushing to her square, delicate forehead, "the whole class screamed with laughter, and the professor fairly danced with anger. His tarantula over, he appealed to Miss Rutherford."

"Breta, meantime, had gotten hold of me," added Frank, "and as she is the only one who has ever put a head on—who has ever caused me to listen to reason, I agreed to tell Miss Rutherford I would retract."

"Did you retract, Sis.?" asked Tom, laughing.

"I told the professor I was convinced the half is *far* greater than the whole, being certain he meant only one-half of what he had said so wholesale. The professor laughed, and peace reigned."

"It would have been as well if some of our

modern poets, with Hesiod, could have discovered that the half is greater than the whole," observed de Grey.

"And some of our windy lawyers and statesmen," added Black.

"It would hardly answer in rationing an army; the boys might object and demand the whole," said Ralph.

XXIV.

EIGHT MADE FOUR.

THE days, meantime, flew by, and so many and such mysterious and varied preparations were going on all around him, that Tom came to his sister one morning in great perplexity.

"Will you enlighten me, Sis., as to when this four-cornered affair is to come off? I being one of the corner pillars would like to know in time to buy my white kids. I ask Sadie, but the little thing shyly refers me to you. I ask Miss Selma, and she smiles beamingly and knowingly and says nothing."

"She thinks, of course, you are making believe, Tom Bowers like."

"But when a fellow does n't know, Sis., and is of an enquiring mind?"

"And you pretend to say you do not know when?"

"I pretend to nothing, Sis. All I know is that the agony is to be put through in a lump, which will make it easier for us all—I having to bear but one-eighth, until that little rose-bud Sadie and I are one. That 's the advantage of co-operation. I 've figured it down to a fine point you see, Sis. ; now tell me when."

"Just two weeks from to-day, you absurd Tom."

"Oh!" gasped Tom. "Thank you, Sis.—don't I look pale?"

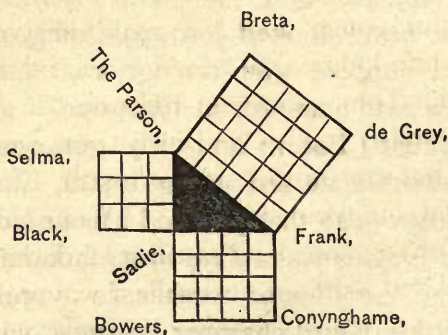
"You never looked less pale in your life, Tom. I suppose you are ignorant also, that the affair is to come off at Elmwood."

"Oh, that I know; and of all the wonderful preparations that are going on at Elmwood. And I know also that you and all our ladies are closeted for hours at a time with Madame Flambeau and her lesser torches in some mysterious Blue-Beard chamber up-stairs, so that I can scarcely get a squint at Sadie of late."

"Poor boy! Did you know, too, the time we have had about bride's-maids? I thought we should have to advertise for them. But so many stylish cousins—like Robin Hood's men—started up, that the next trouble was to make choice

from among them all. A whole legion of loving and aristocratic cousins, since Breta is known as Mr. Whyte's heiress, and de Grey's *fiancée*, have suddenly discovered that she is the most wonderful being in existence. And she is all of that without them to discover it."

"Agreed. But never mind the aristocratic cousins, Sis.; look here. Happy thought!" and Tom took from his pocket a letter, and on the back of it drew the following diagram.



"Weddings made easy. We must all stand thus," continued Tom, as he wrote in the names, "and the lines can be filled out with your bride's-maids and things. It is complete—the square described on the hypotenuse equalling the sum

of the squares on the base and perpendicular, you see. Solving the forty-seventh proposition."

"Go along with your fifteen puzzle. Why, Tom, that 's the diagram of that bridge you spread yourself so on that evening at Elmwood, and Mr. Black said was so hard to get over."

"The very same, Sis. I shall submit my diagram to him. Black being one of New York's first lawyers, will see the value of it—will advise me to get it patented for the benefit of bashful young men. I am going now for those white kids. *Au revoir.*"

"Hold, Tom. Let me tell you. I am now quite certain you never fairly got over that bridge, but are on this side of it still,"

"Lend me your fan, Sis. I feel quite faint. Poor Conynghame! That last shot has done for me," and Tom, in his drollest way, collapsed into an arm-chair, fanning himself with his hand.

"Tom," exclaimed Frank, laughing, "as successor to the immortal Burton, you would win endless laurels."

"There are two of us, Sis., thou and I," groaned Tom from the depths of the arm-chair.

Somehow an acre of winter garden of rarest flowers, adjoining the house, had sprung up at Elmwood, resplendent with Chinese lanterns and every device art could suggest to make it attractive. And the great house was filled to overflowing with wedding guests for a week before the auspicious day.

Mrs. Conynghame, Ralph's mother, with his sister and her husband, had come from a prolonged sojourn abroad to be present at the ceremony—or ceremonies.

Madama the Contessa Romano came all the way from Milan to witness the marriage of her darling Breta, whom she had not seen for over three years.

The *maestro*, Signor Trapassi (returned from his United States tour), hurried the latter part of his sight-seeing in order to be at Elmwood in time.

The young Thornes were there, with their father and mother, as also were all the numerous aristocratic cousins and aunts.

The Misses Rutherford and the dignitary and *élite* of Lea, including the Gen. Leightons, the Judge Waltons, and Squire Atwood, were present at the ceremony. And lastly, standing

with more imposing grace than ever, several inches above the tallest present, Noel Dunraven was there, taking captive all the disengaged hearts of the bride's-maids and the aristocratic cousins by his handsome face and magnificent attitudes.

He had sent to Breta, with a penitential letter craving permission to be present, a penitential bird ingeniously and skilfully executed in mosaic, entirely of rare and costly gems, and bearing in its beak a full-sized lily. The artist had so successfully fashioned the lily that, as though just freshly plucked, the morning dew was still on its delicate petals. It was a significant and suggestive offering, and shone conspicuous among the profusion of exquisite and expensive bridal gifts.

The house was deserted of all but its young master and mistress and the servants. Frank and Conynghame had just started for Southern Italy ; Sadie and Tom for a winter's peep at Niagara, after which they were going to Havre to meet Sadie's father, who, having been present at the wedding of his daughter, ex-

pected to return in the first steamer. Selma and Black had left for Havana, and Mr. Whyte had but just started with Signor Trapassi and the Contessa Romano for Milan. The carriage was at the door that was to convey Breta and de Grey to New York, whence they expected shortly to sail for a visit, first to Paris, and then to the other scenes of Breta's early days, joining Mr. Whyte at Milan.

Breta had greatly feared the embarrassment of her new position when coming face to face with it. But de Grey had made it so easy for her by his manner, so tactful and considerate, so full of almost tender pity, that she stood beside him in her pretty gown for travelling, with her furred wraps on her arm, the matron of but two short hours, listening to what he was saying, with her eyes full of a sweet content, and as calm, outwardly at least, as was her usual wont.

"I have learned to think with you, Breta, darling," he continued, as, having handed her into the carriage, the door was shut upon them and they drove off. "I have come to the conclusion that going in search of the intangible with so much in the *tangible* to live for, would

be a lack of due regard for the tangible." And he looked down into the eyes of the living tangible before him with a look so reverently full of the regard of which he spoke, that the world seemed to melt away from before her vision, and in a voice of utter peace all she said was :

"Joslyn, you and I have only just begun to live."

Elmwood is still bountifully kept up, and each summer sees the reunion there of the eight who were made four. Breta and de Grey, with Mr. Whyte (looking more like a boy that had forgotten to grow old than ever), and with Frank and Conynghame (Frank still declaring she could not live away from Breta) make it their home. And the strangest thing of all is, that the four—the six when Sadie and Tom are there, the eight when Selma and Black are there—have never once quarrelled. And to this day the faintest supernatural sound has never since been heard ; and they do not give the ghosts even the benefit of the doubt.





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